

THE VAULT GUIDE TO THE TOP 50

Consulting Firms 2009 EDITION

is made possible through the generous support of the following sponsors:

Booz | Allen | Hamilton

ESADE

Business School

Ramon Llull University

GALLUP®



Huron
CONSULTING GROUP

mars & co

The media's watching Vault! Here's a sampling of our coverage.

.....

"The best place on the Web to prepare for a job search."

– ***Fortune***

"[Vault guides] make for excellent starting points for job hunters and should be purchased by academic libraries for their career sections [and] university career centers."

– ***Library Journal***

"The granddaddy of worker sites."

– ***US News & World Report***

"A killer app."

– ***The New York Times***

One of *Forbes'* 33 "Favorite Sites."

– ***Forbes***

"To get the unvarnished scoop, check out Vault."

– ***SmartMoney Magazine***

"Vault has become the go-to source for career preparation."

– ***Crain's New York***

"Vault has a wealth of information about major employers and job-searching strategies as well as comments from workers about their experiences at specific companies."

– ***The Washington Post***

"For those hoping to climb the ladder of success, [Vault's] insights are priceless."

– ***Money magazine***

"Vault [provides] the skinny on working conditions at all kinds of companies from current and former employees."

– ***USA Today***

TOP

VAULT GUIDE TO THE
MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY
Top 50
CONSULTING
FIRMS

2009 EDITION

CONSULTING
FIRMS

NAOMI NEWMAN
and the staff of Vault

© 2008 Vault.com Inc.

Copyright © 2008 by Vault.com Inc. All rights reserved.

All information in this book is subject to change without notice. Vault makes no claims as to the accuracy and reliability of the information contained within and disclaims all warranties. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without the express written permission of Vault.com Inc.

Vault, the Vault logo, and "the most trusted name in career information™" are trademarks of Vault.com Inc.

For information about permission to reproduce selections from this book, contact Vault.com Inc. 150 W. 22nd St. New York, New York 10011-1772, (212) 366-4212.

Library of Congress CIP Data is available.

ISBN 13: 978-1-58131-616-2

ISBN 10: 1-58131-616-X

Printed in the United States of America.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the Vault editorial, sales, graphics and IT staff for writing, selling, designing and programming the guide. Special thanks to Brandon Wilkerson, Melissa Newman, Jesse Lee and Laurie Pasiuk for their writing and editorial support, and to Mary Sotomayor and Elena Boldeskou for their production expertise.

As always, this book is dedicated to the more than 4,000 consultants and 87 consulting firms who took time out of their busy schedules to distribute and complete our survey. Your insights about life at the top consulting firms are invaluable, and your willingness to speak candidly will help job seekers and career changers for years to come.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
A Guide to this Guide	2
THE VAULT PRESTIGE RANKINGS	5
Ranking Methodology	7
The Vault 50	8
Practice Area Rankings	10
THE VAULT QUALITY OF LIFE RANKINGS	15
Quality of Life Ranking Methodology	17
The Best 20 Firms to Work For	18
Quality of Life Rankings	19
THE VAULT DIVERSITY RANKINGS	29
Diversity Ranking Methodology	31
The Best 20 Firms for Diversity	31
Diversity Rankings	32
OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTING INDUSTRY	35
The State of Consulting	37
Practice Areas	40
THE VAULT 50	43
1. McKinsey & Company	44
2. The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	52
3. Bain & Company	62
4. Booz & Company	70
5. Monitor Group	78
6. Mercer LLC	87
7. Deloitte	92
8. Oliver Wyman	102
9. PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	110
10. L.E.K. Consulting	116

11. Ernst & Young LLP	122
12. A.T. Kearney	127
13. IBM Global Business Services	134
14. Accenture	140
15. The Parthenon Group	150
16. KPMG LLP	158
17. Katzenbach Partners LLC	162
18. Towers Perrin	169
19. Capgemini	173
20. Gartner, Inc.	179
21. Roland Berger Strategy Consultants	184
22. ZS Associates	189
23. Cambridge Associates LLC	195
24. Hewitt Associates	200
25. NERA Economic Consulting	205
26. Navigant Consulting, Inc.	211
27. AlixPartners, LLP	217
28. BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	221
29. Watson Wyatt Worldwide	227
30. Kurt Salmon Associates	232
31. CRA International, Inc.	237
32. Huron Consulting Group	241
33. Arthur D. Little	248
34. Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	253
35. PRTM	260
36. Gallup Consulting	268
37. The Advisory Board Company	274
38. FTI Consulting, Inc.	277
39. First Manhattan Consulting Group	284
40. Corporate Executive Board	290
41. Cornerstone Research	294
42. Mitchell Madison Group LLC	300
43. LECG	304
44. Alvarez & Marsal	307
45. Mars & Co.	316
46. Aon Consulting Worldwide	319
47. Analysis Group, Inc.	323
48. Archstone Consulting	327
49. Hay Group	331
50. IMS Health Incorporated	335

THE BEST OF THE REST

343

Abt Associates Inc.	344
-----------------------------	-----

Bainbridge, Inc.	348
Bates White	351
The Brattle Group	358
Buck Consultants	364
Celerant Consulting	368
Dean & Company	373
Droege & Comp.	377
Easton Associates, LLC	381
Giuliani Partners LLC	386
Greenwich Associates	389
Health Advances, LLC	394
Kaiser Associates	400
Keystone Strategy, LLC	406
The Lewin Group	410
Mercator Partners LLC	413
Milliman, Inc.	417
The North Highland Company	422
Novantas LLC	425
OC&C Strategy Consultants	432
Opera Solutions	436
PA Consulting Group	442
Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	448
Point B	452
Prophet	456
Protiviti Inc.	459
Putnam Associates	464
Quintiles Consulting	471
The Segal Company	474
Simon-Kucher & Partners	477
Stern Stewart & Co.	483
Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	486
Strategic Decisions Group	491
Strategos	496
Triage Consulting Group	501
Trinity Partners, LLC	508
Vivaldi Partners	515

APPENDIX**521**

Index of Firms	523
About the Editor	526

Introduction

For most industries, 2008 will not be remembered as a banner year. The credit crisis led to economic churn, with even some of the biggest stalwarts of business uncovering losses and forecasting diminished earnings. The consulting industry, however, has weathered the storm, being in many ways insulated from the vicissitudes of the market (consulting is of the business world, but not truly in it). Despite some disruption in revenue and engagement lineups, consulting firms have parlayed the economic troubles of their client base into advisory services aimed at cost cutting and process efficiency. Companies that had once sought help with innovation and expansion were quick to sign on and begin the adjustment to a new economic reality. In the midst of such turmoil, the consulting industry showed not only the ability to refocus, but also growth and profit—the value of the U.S. consulting market reached \$160 billion in 2007, up from \$156 billion in 2006, and hiring targets are still strong. It just goes to show, change and adaptation are the name of the game in this industry.

To stay on top of that change and adaptation, we've surveyed over 4,000 consultants for the 11th edition of the *Vault Guide to the Top 50 Management and Strategy Consulting Firms*. Every year, we survey the best of the management and strategy firms, from gigantic multinationals to boutique firms with fewer than 100 employees and focused practice areas. The 87 profiles in this year's edition are based on detailed research and extensive feedback from current consultants, and encompass everything from company culture to compensation, travel demands and diversity.

Check out the Top 50 rankings to see which firms have the golden touch, according to peer consultants. Consultants at prestigious firms enjoy access to a high caliber of clients and projects, not to mention that a recognizable and well-regarded name puts a sheen on any resume. Prestige aside, there are plenty of other considerations in choosing a consulting firm—for example, specialty, training, perks—and you'll learn about all of them in the *Vault Guide to the Top 50 Management and Strategy Consulting Firms*.

The Editors

Vault.com Inc.

A Guide to this Guide

If you're wondering how our entries are organized, read on. Here's a handy guide to the information you'll find packed into each firm profile in this book.

Firm Facts

Locations: A listing of the firm's offices, with the city (or cities) of its headquarters bolded. For firms with a relatively small number of offices, all cities are included. Countries for international offices are typically not specified, unless the location is uncommon.

Practice Areas: Official departments that employ a significant portion of the firm's consultants. Practice areas are listed in alphabetical order, regardless of their size and prominence.

Uppers and Downers: Good points and, shall we say, less positive points of the firm, as derived from consultant interviews and surveys, as well as other research. Uppers and downers are perceptions and are not based on statistics.

Employment Contact: The person, address or web site that the firm identifies as the best place to send resumes, or the appropriate contact to answer questions about the recruitment process. Sometimes more than one contact is given.

The Buzz

When it comes to other consulting firms, our respondents are full of opinions! We ask them to detail their views and observations about firms other than their own, and collect a sampling of these comments in The Buzz.

When selecting The Buzz, we include quotes most representative of the common perceptions of the firms held by other consultants, even if in our opinion the quotes do not accurately or completely describe the firm. Please keep in mind when reading The Buzz that it's often more fun for outsiders to trash, rather than praise, a competing consulting firm. Nonetheless, The Buzz can be a valuable means of gauging a firm's reputation in the consulting industry, or at least of detecting common misperceptions. We typically include two to four Buzz comments. In some instances we opt not to include The Buzz if we do not receive a diversity of comments.

The Stats

Employer Type: The firm's classification as a publicly traded company, privately held company or subsidiary.

Ticker Symbol: The stock ticker symbol for a public company, as well as the exchange on which the stock is traded.

Chairman, CEO, etc.: The name and title of the leader(s) of the firm, or of the firm's consulting business.

Employees: The total number of employees, including consultants and other staff, at a firm in all offices (unless otherwise specified). Some firms do not disclose this information; figures from the two most recent consecutive years the information is available (if at all) are included.

Revenue: The gross sales (in U.S. dollars) the firm generated in the specified fiscal year(s). Some firms do not disclose this information; numbers from the two most recent consecutive years the information is available (if at all) are included. In some cases, revenue is given in Euros (€).

The Profiles

The profiles are divided into three sections: The Scoop, Getting Hired and Our Survey Says.

The Scoop: The firm's history, clients, recent firm developments and other points of interest.

Getting Hired: Qualifications the firm looks for in new associates, tips on getting hired and other notable aspects of the hiring process.

Our Survey Says: Actual quotes from surveys and interviews with current consultants at the firm on topics such as firm culture, diversity, hours, travel requirements, pay, training and more. Profiles of some firms do not include an Our Survey Says section.

Best of the Rest

Even though the name of this book is the *Vault Guide to the Top 50 Management and Strategy Consulting Firms*, we didn't stop there, and added 37 other firms we thought notable and/or interesting enough for inclusion. These firms are listed in alphabetical order.



TOP

**THE VAULT
PRESTIGE
RANKINGS**

CONSULTING
FIRMS

Ranking Methodology

For the 2008 Vault consulting survey, we selected a list of top consulting firms. These firms were chosen because of their prominence in the consulting industry and their appeal to job seekers. This year, over 4,000 consultants responded to our survey.

The Vault survey was distributed to the firms on Vault's list in spring 2008. In some cases, Vault contacted practicing consultants directly. Survey respondents were asked to rate each consulting firm on the survey on a scale of 1 to 10 based on prestige, with 10 being the most prestigious. Consultants were unable to rate their own firm, and they were asked to rate only those firms with which they were familiar.

Vault collected the survey results and averaged the score for each firm. The firms were then ranked, with the highest score being No. 1, down to No. 50.

We also asked survey respondents to give their perceptions of other firms besides their own. A selection of those comments is featured on each firm profile as The Buzz.

Remember that Vault's top-50 management and strategy consulting firms are chosen by practicing consultants at top consulting firms. Vault does not choose or influence the rankings. The rankings measure perceived prestige (as determined by consulting professionals) and not revenue, size or lifestyle.



The Vault 50 • 2009

The 50 most prestigious consulting firms

2009 RANK	CONSULTING FIRM	PRESTIGE SCORE	2008 RANK	2007 RANK	2006 RANK	HEADQUARTERS/ LARGEST OFFICE
1	McKinsey & Company	8.430	1	1	1	New York, NY
2	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.089	2	2	2	Boston, MA
3	Bain & Company	7.966	3	3	3	Boston, MA
4	Booz & Company	6.535	4	4	4	New York, NY
5	Monitor Group	6.296	5	5	5	Cambridge, MA
6	Mercer LLC	6.160	9	8	8	New York, NY
7	Deloitte	5.844	8	10	15	New York, NY
8	Oliver Wyman	5.755	6	6	6	New York, NY
9	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	5.572	NR	NR	NR	New York, NY
10	L.E.K. Consulting	5.426	13	11	12	Boston, MA London
11	Ernst & Young LLP	5.388	NR	NR	NR	New York, NY London
12	A.T. Kearney	5.373	15	14	14	Chicago, IL
13	IBM Global Business Services	5.352	11	13	13	Armonk, NY
14	Accenture	5.314	14	15	20	New York, NY
15	The Parthenon Group	5.306	10	9	9	Boston, MA
16	KPMG LLP	5.246	NR	NR	NR	New York, NY
17	Katzenbach Partners LLC	5.146	16	19	18	New York, NY
18	Towers Perrin	4.848	18	20	19	Stamford, CT
19	Capgemini	4.752	22	27	30	New York, NY Paris
20	Gartner, Inc.	4.728	12	16	17	Stamford, CT
21	Roland Berger Strategy Consultants	4.684	20	17	11	New York, NY Munich
22	ZS Associates	4.645	24	28	24	Evanston, IL
23	Cambridge Associates LLC	4.588	21	23	31	Boston, MA
24	Hewitt Associates	4.541	23	18	16	Lincolnshire, IL
25	NERA Economic Consulting	4.540	27	22	23	White Plains, NY

NR = Not Ranked

2009 RANK	CONSULTING FIRM	PRESTIGE SCORE	2008 RANK	2007 RANK	2006 RANK	HEADQUARTERS/ LARGEST OFFICE
26	Navigant Consulting, Inc.	4.539	29	31	45	Chicago, IL
27	AlixPartners, LLP	4.457	26	NR	NR	Southfield, MI
28	BearingPoint*	4.433	28	32	29	McLean, VA
29	Watson Wyatt Worldwide	4.355	25	21	25	Arlington, VA
30	Kurt Salmon Associates	4.276	36	36	33	Atlanta, GA
31	CRA International, Inc.	4.275	30	24	21	Boston, MA
32	Huron Consulting Group	4.261	39	46	NR	Chicago, IL
33	Arthur D. Little	4.186	40	30	32	Boston, MA Paris
34	Diamond**	4.149	45	26	26	Chicago, IL
35	PRTM	4.131	33	43	40	Mountain View, CA Waltham, MA
36	Gallup Consulting	4.055	31	40	27	Washington, DC
37	The Advisory Board Company	4.020	38	38	36	Washington, DC
38	FTI Consulting, Inc.	3.925	46	50	NR	Baltimore, MD
39	First Manhattan Consulting Group	3.859	42	35	34	New York, NY
40	Corporate Executive Board	3.844	41	34	43	Washington, DC
41	Cornerstone Research	3.838	37	33	37	New York, NY San Francisco, CA
42	Mitchell Madison Group LLC	3.790	NR	48	42	New York, NY
43	LECG	3.782	35	29	35	Emeryville, CA
44	Alvarez & Marsal	3.758	43	NR	NR	New York, NY
45	Mars & Co	3.737	48	25	28	Greenwich, CT
46	Aon Consulting Worldwide	3.624	49	NR	NR	Chicago, IL
47	Analysis Group, Inc.	3.519	47	39	48	Boston, MA
48	Archstone Consulting	3.512	NR	NR	NR	Stamford, CT
49	Hay Group	3.415	44	NR	39	Philadelphia, PA
50	IMS Health Incorporated	3.370	NR	NR	NR	Norwalk, CT

*BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants

**Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.

Practice Area Rankings

Vault also asked consultants to rank the best firms in several areas of business focus. These areas are economic consulting, energy consulting, financial consulting, human resources consulting, operational consulting, and pharmaceutical and health care consulting. Consultants were allowed to vote for up to three firms as the best in each area.

The following charts indicate the rankings in each practice area, along with the total percentage of votes cast in favor of each firm. (As long as at least one consultant voted for more than one firm, no firm could get 100 percent of the votes; if every consultant had voted for the same three firms, for example, the maximum score would be 33.3 percent.)

Economic Consulting

RANK	FIRM	% OF VOTES	2008 RANK
1	NERA Economic Consulting	14.89	2
2	McKinsey & Company	12.46	1
3	CRA International, Inc.	8.13	3
4	Bain & Company	6.53	5 (Tie)
5	Analysis Group, Inc.	6.00	4
6	LECG	5.93	5 (Tie)
7	Cornerstone Research	5.78	5 (Tie)
8	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	3.80	6
9	Monitor Group	2.58	8 (Tie)
10	Booz & Company	2.36	7

Energy Consulting

RANK	FIRM	% OF VOTES	2008 RANK
1	McKinsey & Company	22.86	1
2	Booz & Company	11.63	2
3	Bain & Company	7.22	3
4	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	6.55	4
5	Accenture	5.48	5
6	Deloitte	5.35	6
7	CRA International, Inc.	4.14	7
8	Navigant Consulting, Inc.	2.94	NR
9	A.T. Kearney	2.67	8
10 (Tie)	IBM Global Business Services	2.27	NR
10 (Tie)	NERA Economic Consulting	2.27	10

Financial Consulting

RANK	FIRM	% OF VOTES	2008 RANK
1	McKinsey & Company	22.21	1
2	Bain & Company	12.61	2
3	Oliver Wyman	8.65	3
4	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	7.62	4
5	First Manhattan Consulting Group	5.65	8
6	Deloitte	5.50	5
7	Ernst & Young LLP	4.77	NR
8	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	3.89	NR
9	Booz & Company	3.37	7
10	KPMG LLP	3.15	NR

Human Resources Consulting

RANK	FIRM	% OF VOTES	2008 RANK
1	Mercer LLC	30.32	1
2	Hewitt Associates	16.18	2
3	Towers Perrin	13.21	3
4	Watson Wyatt Worldwide	6.41	4
5 (Tie)	Deloitte	4.76	5
5 (Tie)	Hay Group	4.76	6
6	Oliver Wyman	3.04	NR
7	McKinsey & Company	2.38	7
8	Accenture	1.65	8
9	Aon Consulting Worldwide	1.52	10
10 (Tie)	Booz & Company	1.32	9
10 (Tie)	Katzenbach Partners LLC	1.32	NR

Operational Consulting

RANK	FIRM	% OF VOTES	2008 RANK
1	Accenture	15.52	1
2	A.T. Kearney	12.84	3
3	Deloitte	11.64	2
4	McKinsey & Company	11.36	4
5	Booz & Company	9.41	5
6	IBM Global Business Services	7.90	6
7	Bain & Company	6.04	7
8	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	3.19	8
9	PRTM	2.51	NR
10	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	2.06	NR

Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting

RANK	FIRM	% OF VOTES	2008 RANK
1	McKinsey & Company	17.18	1
2	ZS Associates	10.63	2
3	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	7.77	3
4	Bain & Company	5.53	5
5	IMS Health Incorporated	5.40	6
6	Deloitte	5.28	4
7	Accenture	3.76	7 (Tie)
8	Booz & Company	3.46	8
9	L.E.K. Consulting	3.04	NR
10	The Advisory Board Company	2.67	7 (Tie)



TOP

THE VAULT

**QUALITY
OF LIFE**
RANKINGS

CONSULTING
FIRMS

Quality of Life Ranking Methodology

In addition to ranking other firms in terms of prestige, survey respondents were asked to rate their own firms in a variety of categories. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 the lowest, respondents evaluated their firms in the following quality of life areas:

Overall satisfaction	Interaction with clients
Compensation	Relationships with supervisors
Work/life balance	Firm culture
Hours in the office	Travel requirements
Formal training	Offices

Ranking the firms

A firm's score in each category is simply the average of these rankings. In compiling our quality of life rankings, we only ranked firms from whose consultants we received 10 or more responses for a particular question. Only consulting firms that distributed the Vault survey to their consultants were ranked. Firms that distributed the survey this year were:

A.T. Kearney	First Manhattan Consulting Group	OC&C Strategy Consultants
Accenture	FTI Consulting, Inc.	Oliver Wyman
Alvarez & Marsal	Gallup Consulting	Opera Solutions
Arthur D. Little	Gartner, Inc.	PA Consulting Group
Bain & Company	Greenwich Associates	The Parthenon Group
Bates White	Health Advances, LLC	Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC
BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	Huron Consulting Group	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
Booz & Company	Kaiser Associates	PRTM
The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	Katzenbach Partners LLC	Putnam Associates
The Brattle Group	Keystone Strategy, LLC	Roland Berger Strategy Consultants
Celerant Consulting	Kurt Salmon Associates	Simon-Kucher & Partners
Cornerstone Research	L.E.K. Consulting	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.
Dean & Company	Mercator Partners LLC	Strategic Decisions Group
Deloitte	Milliman, Inc.	Strategos
Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	Mitchell Madison Group LLC	Triage Consulting Group
Droege & Comp.	Monitor Group	Trinity Partners, LLC
Easton Associates, LLC	Navigant Consulting, Inc.	Vivaldi Partners
	NERA Economic Consulting	ZS Associates
	Novantas LLC	

The Best 20 Firms to Work For

Which are the best firms to work for? For some, this is a far more important consideration than prestige. To determine our Best 20 firms, we analyzed our initial list of 87 firms using a formula that weighted the most relevant categories for an overall quality of life ranking. Each firm's overall score was calculated using the following formula:

25 percent overall satisfaction	5 percent formal training
15 percent compensation	5 percent interaction with clients
15 percent work/life balance	5 percent relationships with supervisors
10 percent hours in the office	5 percent firm culture
10 percent travel requirements	5 percent overall diversity

Like our Top 50 rankings, our Best 20 is meant to reflect the subjective opinion of consultants. By its nature, the list is based on the perceptions of insiders—some of whom may be biased in favor (or against) their firm.

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Bain & Company	8.653
2	Trinity Partners, LLC	8.605
3	Putnam Associates	8.578
4	Gallup Consulting	8.413
5	Health Advances, LLC	8.387
6	Cornerstone Research	8.353
7	Strategos	8.207
8	The Parthenon Group	8.197
9	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.173
10	Novantas LLC	8.168
11	Easton Associates, LLC	8.130
12	Triage Consulting Group	7.989
13	Milliman, Inc.	7.971
14	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	7.962
15	Alvarez & Marsal	7.916
16	PRTM	7.912
17	Katzenbach Partners LLC	7.852
18	Monitor Group	7.848
19	Oliver Wyman	7.788
20	Kaiser Associates	7.779

Overall Satisfaction

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very poor and 10 means excellent, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with your firm?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Gallup Consulting	9.359
2	Bain & Company	9.282
3 (Tie)	Putnam Associates	9.200
3 (Tie)	Trinity Partners, LLC	9.200
4	The Parthenon Group	9.192
5	Health Advances, LLC	9.088
6	Strategos	9.071
7	Novantas LLC	9.065
8	Easton Associates, LLC	8.944
9	Celerant Consulting	8.923
10	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.914
11	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	8.893
12	PRTM	8.827
13	Milliman, Inc.	8.775
14	Monitor Group	8.770
15	Cornerstone Research	8.694
16	Katzenbach Partners LLC	8.672
17	Kaiser Associates	8.667
18	Arthur D. Little	8.650
19	Triage Consulting Group	8.544
20	OC&C Strategy Consultants	8.486

Work/Life Balance

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is very poor and 10 is excellent, how would you rate your firm's efforts to promote a livable work/life balance?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Putnam Associates	9.160
2	Trinity Partners, LLC	9.000
3	Triage Consulting Group	8.971
4	Easton Associates, LLC	8.833
5	Gallup Consulting	8.667
6	Bain & Company	8.440
7	Strategos	8.429
8	Kaiser Associates	8.333
9	Alvarez & Marsal	8.240
10	Health Advances, LLC	8.200
11	BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	8.191
12	PRTM	8.118
13	Arthur D. Little	8.100
14	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	8.046
15	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	7.947
16	Oliver Wyman	7.931
17	Katzenbach Partners LLC	7.915
18	Novantas LLC	7.867
19	Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	7.850
20	Monitor Group	7.808

Hours in the Office

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means completely unsatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied, please rank your satisfaction with the number of hours you spend in the office each week.

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Gallup Consulting	8.816
2	Putnam Associates	8.800
3	Easton Associates, LLC	8.556
4	Triage Consulting Group	8.250
5	Alvarez & Marsal	8.248
6	BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	8.195
7	Strategos	8.154
8 (Tie)	Trinity Partners, LLC	8.100
8 (Tie)	Vivaldi Partners	8.100
9	Bain & Company	8.022
10	Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	8.000
11	Health Advances, LLC	7.971
12	Arthur D. Little	7.950
13 (Tie)	Kaiser Associates	7.909
13 (Tie)	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	7.909
14	NERA Economic Consulting	7.852
15	FTI Consulting, Inc.	7.810
16	PRTM	7.784
17	Katzenbach Partners LLC	7.746
18	Cornerstone Research	7.722
19	Monitor Group	7.657
20	Milliman, Inc.	7.650

Compensation

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is far below average and 10 is far in excess of industry average, how would you rate your firm's compensation (including salary and bonus)?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	The Parthenon Group	8.480
2	Oliver Wyman	8.254
3	Bain & Company	8.231
4	Trinity Partners, LLC	8.000
5	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	7.935
6	First Manhattan Consulting Group	7.824
7	Milliman, Inc.	7.763
8	Cornerstone Research	7.706
9	Alvarez & Marsal	7.697
10	Novantas LLC	7.667
11	Bates White	7.521
12	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	7.474
13	Strategos	7.071
14	Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	7.063
15	A.T. Kearney	7.062
16 (Tie)	Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	7.046
16 (Tie)	FTI Consulting, Inc.	7.046
17	OC&C Strategy Consultants	7.000
18	Health Advances, LLC	6.897
19	L.E.K. Consulting	6.884
20	Opera Solutions	6.808

Interaction with Clients

On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your opportunity to interact with your clients' top-level management?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Milliman, Inc.	9.275
2	Bain & Company	9.171
3	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	9.140
4	Gallup Consulting	9.108
5	Novantas LLC	9.100
6	Strategic Decisions Group	9.095
7	Celerant Consulting	9.083
8 (Tie)	The Parthenon Group	9.077
8 (Tie)	Strategos	9.077
9	PRTM	8.934
10	Alvarez & Marsal	8.924
11	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.883
12	Health Advances, LLC	8.879
13	Booz & Company	8.821
14	Trinity Partners, LLC	8.800
15	Putnam Associates	8.783
16	Katzenbach Partners LLC	8.782
17	Monitor Group	8.781
18	A.T. Kearney	8.717
19	Easton Associates, LLC	8.667
20	Gartner, Inc.	8.652

Relationships with Supervisors

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very poor and 10 means excellent, how would you rate your relationships with your superiors/supervisors?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	The Parthenon Group	9.539
2	Putnam Associates	9.480
3	Novantas LLC	9.385
4	Gallup Consulting	9.290
5	Strategos	9.286
6	Bain & Company	9.280
7	PRTM	9.267
8	Celerant Consulting	9.231
9	Monitor Group	9.090
10 (Tie)	Cornerstone Research	9.000
10 (Tie)	Milliman, Inc.	9.000
10 (Tie)	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	9.000
11	Deloitte	8.990
12	Triage Consulting Group	8.969
13	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.929
14	Health Advances, LLC	8.914
15	FTI Consulting, Inc.	8.905
16 (Tie)	Accenture	8.773
16 (Tie)	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	8.773
17	Easton Associates, LLC	8.706
18	Simon-Kucher & Partners	8.674
19	Kaiser Associates	8.636
20	ZS Associates	8.627

Firm Culture

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all pleasant and 10 is extremely pleasant, assess your firm's culture.

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	The Parthenon Group	9.615
2	Gallup Consulting	9.564
3	Putnam Associates	9.560
4	Bain & Company	9.556
5	Triage Consulting Group	9.333
6	Strategos	9.286
7	Cornerstone Research	9.278
8	Easton Associates, LLC	9.222
9	Kaiser Associates	9.182
10	Monitor Group	9.180
11	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	9.168
12	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	9.105
13 (Tie)	Katzenbach Partners LLC	9.100
13 (Tie)	Novantas LLC	9.100
14	PRTM	9.092
15	Deloitte	9.020
16	Celerant Consulting	9.000
17	Trinity Partners, LLC	8.900
18	Simon-Kucher & Partners	8.837
19	ZS Associates	8.831
20	Health Advances, LLC	8.800

Formal Training

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate your satisfaction with the training offered by your firm?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Bain & Company	9.508
2 (Tie)	Health Advances, LLC	8.824
2 (Tie)	Triage Consulting Group	8.824
3	Strategic Decisions Group	8.632
4	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.562
5	Cornerstone Research	8.556
6	Deloitte	8.374
7	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	8.105
8	Putnam Associates	8.080
9	ZS Associates	8.068
10	Accenture	8.053
11	The Parthenon Group	8.000
12	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	7.905
13	Arthur D. Little	7.737
14	Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	7.722
15	Trinity Partners, LLC	7.700
16	L.E.K. Consulting	7.659
17	OC&C Strategy Consultants	7.657
18	PA Consulting Group	7.611
19	BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	7.564
20	Bates White	7.453

Offices

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being miserable and 10 being optimal, how would you rate your offices (your firm's offices, not your clients' offices)?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Gallup Consulting	9.615
2	Bain & Company	9.242
3	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	9.036
4	Novantas LLC	9.032
5	Monitor Group	8.940
6	Katzenbach Partners LLC	8.900
7	Arthur D. Little	8.842
8	The Parthenon Group	8.808
9	Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	8.760
10	PRTM	8.693
11	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	8.684
12	OC&C Strategy Consultants	8.639
13	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	8.636
14	Milliman, Inc.	8.539
15	Strategos	8.429
16	Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	8.409
17	Cornerstone Research	8.371
18 (Tie)	Deloitte	8.364
18 (Tie)	Droege & Comp.	8.364
19	Accenture	8.342
20	BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	8.333

Travel Requirements

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means excessive and 10 means minimal, how would you rate your firm's travel requirements?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Cornerstone Research	9.306
2	The Brattle Group	9.154
3	Putnam Associates	8.760
4	Bates White	8.712
5	Kaiser Associates	8.500
6	Health Advances, LLC	8.371
7	Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	8.316
8	NERA Economic Consulting	8.118
9	ZS Associates	8.051
10	L.E.K. Consulting	7.721
11	Easton Associates, LLC	7.235
12	Simon-Kucher & Partners	7.163
13	Bain & Company	7.000
14	Dean & Company	6.952
15	BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	6.895
16	Novantas LLC	6.867
17	Gallup Consulting	6.865
18	Monitor Group	6.788
19	OC&C Strategy Consultants	6.778
20	The Parthenon Group	6.731



TOP

THE VAULT

DIVERSITY

RANKINGS

CONSULTING
FIRMS

Diversity Ranking Methodology

Vault's survey asked consultants to rate their firm's diversity with respect to women, with respect to minorities and with respect to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals. When asking consultants to assess their firm's diversity in these categories, we asked them to think about hiring, promoting, mentoring and other programs.

The Best 20 Firms for Diversity

To determine an overall diversity score, we took the average of the scores firms received in each of the three diversity categories (women, minorities and GLBT).

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Gallup Consulting	9.333
2	Katzenbach Partners LLC	9.096
3	Bain & Company	9.074
4	Cornerstone Research	8.934
5	Deloitte	8.918
6	Health Advances, LLC	8.901
7	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.863
8	Easton Associates, LLC	8.858
9	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	8.808
10	Milliman, Inc.	8.772
11	Arthur D. Little	8.635
12	Accenture	8.592
13	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	8.426
14	NERA Economic Consulting	8.422
15	Bates White	8.418
16	Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	8.365
17	Vivaldi Partners	8.341
18	FTI Consulting, Inc.	8.325
19	Simon-Kucher & Partners	8.317
20	Trinity Partners, LLC	8.289

Diversity—Women

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means needs a lot of improvement and 10 means exemplary, how receptive is your firm to women in terms of hiring, promoting, mentoring and other programs?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Easton Associates, LLC	9.941
2	Gallup Consulting	9.711
3	Triage Consulting Group	9.706
4	Health Advances, LLC	9.686
5	Cornerstone Research	9.600
6	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	9.357
7	Deloitte	9.266
8	Bain & Company	9.230
9	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	8.952
10 (Tie)	Katzenbach Partners LLC	8.944
10 (Tie)	Milliman, Inc.	8.944
11	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.937
12	NERA Economic Consulting	8.686
13	Accenture	8.653
14	Vivaldi Partners	8.600
15	The Parthenon Group	8.385
16	Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	8.278
17	Huron Consulting Group	8.232
18	Bates White	8.220
19	Monitor Group	8.195
20	FTI Consulting, Inc.	8.100

Diversity—Minorities

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means needs a lot of improvement and 10 means exemplary, how receptive is your firm to minorities in terms of hiring, promoting, mentoring and other programs?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Arthur D. Little	9.389
2	PRTM	8.859
3	Gallup Consulting	8.788
4	Katzenbach Partners LLC	8.719
5	Bain & Company	8.673
6	Deloitte	8.564
7	Opera Solutions	8.560
8	Accenture	8.537
9	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	8.535
10	Milliman, Inc.	8.514
11	Celerant Consulting	8.500
12	FTI Consulting, Inc.	8.375
13	Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	8.313
14	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	8.286
15	Bates White	8.269
16	Health Advances, LLC	8.258
17	Vivaldi Partners	8.200
18	Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	8.177
19	ZS Associates	8.132
20	OC&C Strategy Consultants	8.125

Diversity—GLBT

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very poor and 10 means excellent, how would you rate your firm's commitment to diversity with respect to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals?

RANK	FIRM	SCORE
1	Katzenbach Partners LLC	9.625
2	Gallup Consulting	9.500
3	Bain & Company	9.320
4	Strategic Decisions Group	9.182
5	The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.	9.117
6	Cornerstone Research	9.088
7	Simon-Kucher & Partners	9.026
8	Deloitte	8.925
9	Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	8.915
10	Milliman, Inc.	8.857
11	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	8.782
12	Bates White	8.766
13	Health Advances, LLC	8.760
14	Easton Associates, LLC	8.692
15	Monitor Group	8.642
16	Accenture	8.585
17	NERA Economic Consulting	8.539
18 (Tie)	Celerant Consulting	8.400
18 (Tie)	Trinity Partners, LLC	8.400
19	Novantas LLC	8.333
20	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	8.231



TOP

OVERVIEW OF THE
CONSULTING
INDUSTRY

CONSULTING
FIRMS

The State of Consulting

Strategy holding steady

2007 marked the consulting industry's third consecutive year of growth. The robust economy had clients interested in implementing improvements—and willing to spend top dollar to get the right advice. Positive economic conditions, such as the boom in private equity, set the stage for clients to focus on profit lines and to find savvy ways to cut costs. Consulting firms also benefited from an all-time high in M&A activity, as strategy shops were called in to help with due diligence projects or postmerger integration. In the U.S., which accounts for almost 50 percent of the worldwide consulting market, revenue hit \$160 billion, up from \$156 billion in 2006.

Though business was strong throughout most of 2007, by year's end, the subprime mortgage crisis had changed the economic climate dramatically. Fallout from years of dubious lending policies motivated corporations across the industry spectrum to rein in their strategy spending. As a result, and in marked contrast to the double-digit growth of previous years, the consulting industry grew modestly in 2007, up just 6 percent for the year. And while analysts aren't yet predicting an all-out crisis for 2008, they are nevertheless forecasting tighter budgets and fewer engagements overall. The credit debacle hasn't meant only doom and gloom for the industry, however: In the short term, it is providing work, as financial services firms look to consultants for help with crisis management and recovery strategies. FTI Consulting, for example, has been especially prosperous of late, seeing a surge in demand in the face of the credit crunch. The firm focuses on services for companies that are in trouble—whether economic, legal or regulatory—and its forensic accounting division, especially, has shown marked growth since 2007.

Weathering the storm

One thing is for certain—consultancies are better prepared this time around. After the dot-com trauma of the early 21st century, clients became more sophisticated buyers, demanding more value, deeper expertise and targeted solutions. Many now insist that their projects be staffed by senior-level consultants—industry experts who really know their sector—rather than fresh-out-of-school generalists. In response to such client selectivity, over the last decade consulting firms have shifted strategies, offering specific industry knowledge and emphasizing quantifiable results. To differentiate themselves in the marketplace, many firms are now focused on niche areas, such as economic consulting, security or globalization strategy. And rather than honing in solely on strategy, firms have also started offering a wider range of services, including IT, restructuring and compliance.

Anybody's game

With clients demanding targeted services, more niche firms (many spun off from larger consultancies after the dot-com bust and its ensuing layoffs) have entered the landscape, jousting with the larger, well-established consulting shops for projects. Competition in the consulting world has no doubt gotten tougher, since small firms are often able to undercut the fees of blue-chip houses by keeping overhead and staff expenses low. Smaller firms may also get a foot in the door by accepting projects that aren't as "sexy," such as implementation or data migration, before taking on actual strategy work.

Further heating up competition are the Big Four accounting firms that have re-entered the consulting arena. After the Enron scandal, the Securities and Exchange Commission tightened independence requirements, prompting several of the Big Four to separate their consulting divisions from their audit and accounting wings. In 2007, the five-year noncompete agreements that Ernst & Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers and KPMG had signed with their spin-offs came to an end. The companies were effectively released back into the consulting fold, and cranked up their business advisory services and financial and risk consulting divisions accordingly.

The hiatus has not diminished their brand value in clients' eyes, however: Consulting and advisory services were the fastest growing service lines for all three firms in 2007, and all posted impressive financial results. Ernst & Young posted a 29 percent revenue share coming from its transaction advisory services division in 2007, while KPMG's advisory division accounted for 32 percent of revenue and PwC's advisory service line brought in 22 percent. Deloitte, the only one of the Big Four firms not to

cast off its consulting practice, also enjoyed success in this area, with its advisory and consulting divisions comprising 31 percent of total revenue in 2007.

Servicing financial services

A large part of the past two years' strategy consulting growth was propelled by record-level M&A activity. Strong profits and cheaper debt drove up corporate demand for deals, while private equity firms rife with cash were eager to get in on the action. In 2007, the value of the global M&A market was \$4.3 trillion (of which \$1.4 trillion came from the U.S.), up 20 percent over 2006, and the frenzy created a new client base for consulting firms. As these transactions increased in value and grew more complex, consultants were called in to evaluate potential deals, analyze markets, conduct due diligence and smooth postmerger wrinkles. Bain & Company's mergers and acquisitions practice, for example, provides acquisition screening, due diligence, integration advisory and other M&A strategies aimed at growth and facilitation. Bain reported that in 2007, M&A activity was strongest during the second and third quarters.

In 2008, however, with M&A and private equity activity dropping off, a range of other financial services has pumped demand for consulting services. As the market becomes more dynamic and more global, businesses are placing higher priority on risk management, raising demand for risk and security consulting. Another hot area is regulatory consulting, as banks navigate Basel II requirements and Sarbanes-Oxley compliance issues. Kennedy Information forecasts that financial services consulting spending will increase from \$60 billion in 2007 to \$74 billion in 2008.

America's got talent

Despite the shaky economic conditions, there are no signs of consulting firms slowing their recruiting plans. According to Kennedy Information, 75 percent of consulting firms plan to hire as many new recruits in 2008 as they did in 2007, when hiring at the junior level was at its peak. This aggressive hiring stance indicates that most firms are confident that the credit crunch won't stifle business growth in the long term. Some companies are also raising target hiring numbers to keep up with the slightly higher turnover that has resulted from competition for experienced consultants. Due to the war for talent, many U.S. firms saw 20 to 35 percent attrition in 2007.

In 2008, top graduates just entering the consulting field will be able to choose from a spectrum of options. Some will no doubt be attracted to the name and prestige of a blue-chip firm or a public entity that can offer stock options. Smaller, niche firms, on the other hand, may appeal to candidates who wish to accrue specialized experience. Although large public companies are typically able to offer higher salaries, smaller or private firms can lure candidates with the promise of more client exposure, faster career progression or profit sharing from an early stage in their career.

Recruiters are also scouring campuses for MBA candidates who have particular industry expertise, rather than a broad, generalist background. As firms seek to add value in a business climate where engagements are more complex and clients are pickier about whom they work with, specialist consultants are in high demand. Candidates with a track record in the public sector, compliance or risk management will likely have their choice of firms. Consultants with a few years' experience are also in demand, as companies seek out hires who can hit the ground running. And even with the financial services industry taking a beating, companies that specialize in this sector, such as Oliver Wyman and The Boston Consulting Group, are still hiring at a steady pace.

Cashing in

Though demand for talent is high, pay levels within the industry—both in terms of base salary and bonuses—have remained relatively flat. Some firms do offer an incentive-based compensation structure, tying bonuses to individual and group performance, and to that of the firm as a whole. As consultancies still aren't able to compete with the lucrative bonuses offered by hedge funds or private equity groups, many are sweetening employment packages with lifestyle perks like flexible schedules, work-from-home options, sabbaticals or part-time career tracks. The strategy seems to be working: Despite the unimpressive salary increases, the consulting industry remains one of the top picks for new MBA grads (and the stream of layoffs in the financial sector has no doubt enhanced the industry's allure for students).

Outsourcing's second wave

Well after the first wave of business process outsourcing projects first took customer service and software development overseas, the BPO market is still providing loads of work. In an ongoing effort to boost efficiency and save money, companies are now outsourcing more complex operations like finance, payroll and human resources. In 2007, the National Outsourcing Association estimated the North American BPO market at over \$127 billion—more than half of the \$217 billion global market. Consulting firms are getting a piece of this lucrative pie by assisting clients with global sourcing strategies and helping to transform their business operations to a BPO model.

Although the BPO market is still going strong, the business is trending away from the megadeals (\$1 billion-plus engagements) of the past. In North America, total contract value in 2007 dropped, as did contract duration. As *Consulting Times* posits, 2007 was the first time total contract numbers declined—by 12 percent. Part of the drop is due to maturation of the market; businesses are increasingly using several specialist providers, and contracting each for just one piece of the whole BPO project, instead of using a single outsourcing provider for all. According to Gartner Research, the highest demand for BPO services comes from the financial services and multiprocess markets.

India and beyond

India continues to be a hot spot for growth, both for outsourcing and for advisory service lines. Between 2005 and 2007, IBM doubled its employee numbers in India to over 53,000, and in 2008, KPMG announced plans to raise headcount in the country from 3,000 to 5,000 by 2010. Accenture has also taken a substantial interest in the Indian market—it employs 35,000 there, more than in any other region, and maintains 12 global delivery centers.

Though most consulting firms are still investing resources in the subcontinent, India's rising labor costs and shortage of talent have firms eyeing China. In fact, according to a 2007 report from research firm IDC, China is expected to overtake India as the top outsourcing destination by 2011. Deloitte aims to have 20,000 employees in China by 2015, up from 8,500 in 2007, and Ernst & Young plans to expand from 8,000 to 30,000 in the country over the next decade, adding two or three new branches in Asia annually within the next few years. Additional areas popping up as prime BPO centers include Vietnam, Singapore and the Philippines. In fact, IDC predicts that the Asia Pacific BPO market as a whole will expand to \$14 billion by 2010.

The next big thing

Consulting firms are also seeing business take off in other developing economies, such as Eastern Europe. Outsourcing in the region has been ramping up, thanks to the availability of highly educated, multilingual workers who demand less in salary than their Western European counterparts. The region's outsourcing industry, estimated at \$2 billion in 2007, is expected to grow 30 percent by 2010. But Eastern Europe is now more than just an outsourcing destination; it is becoming a strong market for strategy consulting. As more countries in the region meet European Union economic standards, and as formerly state-owned industries—such as telecommunications—deregulate, multinational businesses are establishing a presence in Turkey, Romania, the Czech Republic and Russia. As such, consultants are being tapped by banks, financial services and telecom clients to help them navigate these new markets. Kennedy Information predicts that growth in the \$4 billion Eastern European consulting market will outpace that of the Western European market through 2009.

Earthy efforts

Environmental awareness was an emerging focus for the consulting industry in 2007. The pitfalls of global warming prompted a number of firms to adopt long-term initiatives with the stated goal of reducing their carbon footprint—many even hoping to achieve carbon neutrality. L.E.K., Capgemini and A.T. Kearney, as well as others, launched formal green programs in 2007. Among their resolutions are increased use of recycled and recyclable office materials, reduced energy waste in daily operations and minimization of air travel to client sites. These firms and others also spearheaded environmental advisory practice areas, applying the lessons of conservation learned in their own programs toward assisting clients, especially those in industries such as oil and gas, chemicals and energy, that face increasingly stringent compliance standards.

Practice Areas

Operations and implementation

Operations consulting is what puts strategy into action. In years past, operations consulting focused on saving money and increasing efficiency. In the recent booming economy, however, clients were more focused on expansion and profit growth, so operations consulting now revolves around responding to market changes, globalization and customer interaction (though today, with clients taking a cautionary stance toward spending, there has been a slight shift back to earlier conventions). While strategy involves marking out clear goals, operations consulting focuses on the practical means of reaching these goals, which might include allocating resources, shifting value chain priorities, evaluating benefits of outsourcing or examining customer service and distribution—all to help clients alter processes in response to competition or react to shifts in the market. Kennedy Information estimates that the \$45 billion operational consulting market will grow at a compound annual growth rate of 7.1 percent through 2010.

Examples of typical operations and implementation engagements include:

- Evaluating procurement, sourcing and supplier relationships for a manufacturer
- Developing a global financial reporting system for a multinational business
- Implementing a customer loyalty program to help a credit card company attract and retain customers

Human resources consulting

Even with fine-tuned strategies and streamlined operations, businesses won't succeed without the right people in place. HR consulting addresses the issue of maximizing the value of staff and placing the right employees in roles that suit them. HR consulting firms are also hired for organizational restructuring, talent management, HR systems implementation, benefits planning and compensation. This segment is expected to expand in 2008, and to continue growing at a compound annual rate of 83 percent through 2010, according to Kennedy Information. Increased demand for benefits consulting, due to revisions in the U.S. Pension Protection Act and Financial Accounting Standards Board changes to pension plans, is contributing to growth in the market.

An important subsection of HR consulting is HR outsourcing. Increasingly, clients are turning to HR consulting firms to manage their internal HR systems. Kennedy Information reports that the combined global market for HR outsourcing and HR BPO was worth \$31 billion at the end of 2007.

Examples of typical human resources consulting engagements include:

- Helping a business devise a leadership development plan for its junior employees
- Evaluating the financial consequences of changing benefits plans
- Developing a retention strategy for a firm that has experienced high turnover

Health care/pharmaceutical consulting

With a market worth over \$20 billion, health care consulting continues to be a core growth area. As the U.S. population and that of other industrialized countries ages, as scientists make further advances in genetic engineering and as patents for blockbuster drugs expire, the health care industry thrives.

The National Coalition on Health Care reports that total U.S. health care expenditures were \$2.3 trillion in 2007, and are expected to hit \$4.2 trillion by 2016. Furthermore, health spending in the U.S., at 16 percent of GDP, accounts for a larger share of GDP than in any other major industrialized country. With so much cash at stake, the industry is predictably overrun with players. That's where health care and pharmaceutical consulting firms come into play—helping clients, such as life sciences firms,

hospitals, HMOs and drug companies, navigate a complicated maze of legislation, tackle competition, manage costs on vendors and equipment, and implement new technology.

Examples of typical health care/pharmaceutical engagements include:

- Developing an electronic medical records system for a hospital
- Analyzing market competition for a new pharmaceutical product
- Helping an insurance company manage reimbursements

Economic consulting

With global economies growing progressively intertwined, businesses in the U.S. are no longer isolated from economic shifts in other parts of the world. Thus, clients often turn to think tank-like economic consulting firms for guidance. These firms, typically loaded with economics PhDs and MBAs, as well as industry experts, investigate the economic factors that help clients resolve competition, antitrust, public policy and regulation issues, both domestic and global. Quantitative analysis, statistical studies and modeling services often form the core of economic consulting engagements.

Examples of typical economic consulting engagements include:

- Helping a client comply with a multitude of tax regulations in the various countries in which it operates
- Projecting the financial impact of a new environmental regulation
- Assessing the implications of a proposed merger

Financial consulting

In 2007, consulting spending by the financial services industry topped \$60 billion, and is projected to hit \$74 billion by 2011, according to Kennedy Information. Growth in the sector is predicted to remain strong over the long term, despite (and largely due to) current credit woes. The market has gained momentum as consultants step in to assist companies manage crises, deal with global market competition, develop offshore establishments, and find new markets and customers. Other financial service areas driving expansion are regulatory compliance, M&A, divestitures, private equity and risk.

Financial consulting firms tend toward two types of service offerings; either they work with financial services firms to enhance their strategies and performance, or they use a specific financial model to enhance client performance. In both cases, the focus is typically on boosting shareholder value.

Examples of typical financial consulting engagements include:

- Applying a proprietary financial model to improve performance
- Helping an investment firm identify a strategy to reach a new target market
- Evaluating liquidity for a private equity firm



TOP

THE VAULT
50

CONSULTING
FIRMS

McKinsey & Company

55 East 52nd Street
New York, NY 10022
Phone: (212) 446-7000
Fax: (212) 446-8575
www.mckinsey.com

LOCATIONS

90 offices in 51 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Functional Practice Areas

Business Technology Office • Corporate Finance •
Marketing & Sales • Operations • Organization • Risk •
Strategy

Industry Practices

Automotive • Banking & Finance • Consumer Goods •
Energy & Materials • Healthcare Payors & Providers •
Insurance • Media • Pharmaceuticals • Private Equity •
Public Sector • Retail • Social Sector • Technology •
Telecommunications • Travel

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Managing Director: Ian Davis

2008 Employees: 16,000 +

2007 Employees: 14,000

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

- #1 – Energy Consulting
- #1 – Financial Consulting
- #1 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting
- #2 – Economic Consulting
- #4 – Operational Consulting
- #7 – Human Resources Consulting

UPPERS

- “Freedom and breadth to focus on what you like”
- “From a brand equity standpoint, it has the best brand in the consulting industry”
- The “best network” among top consulting firms

DOWNERS

- “Inconsistent experiences with senior management within the firm”
- Travel is pretty much a given
- Insufficient time to take advantage of all the formal training opportunities

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.mckinsey.com/careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “No. 1 resume stamp”
- “Too ‘off-the-shelf’”
- “Best minds”
- “Headstrong, dog-eat-dog culture”

THE SCOOP

The Cadillac of consultancies

McKinsey & Company is roundly considered to be the most prestigious management consulting firm. It has achieved a level of notoriety so great as to be known even to laymen, for whom the name McKinsey evokes the consulting industry as a whole (which makes it as much the Q-Tip of consultancies as the Cadillac). The firm employs more than 8,500 consultants in 90 offices across 51 countries, and in its practices, it addresses strategic, organizational, operational and technological issues. McKinsey's client roster features two-thirds of the Fortune 1000, governments and nonprofit entities, as well as three of the world's five-largest companies.

The early days

The company was founded in Chicago in 1926 by James O. McKinsey, a professor at the University of Chicago who championed strict budgeting as the key to business management. Early client Marshall Field's, the iconic Chicago department store, poached McKinsey to make him their own CEO, though he passed away soon after, in 1937. Marvin Bower, who had been hired as the head of a second branch in New York, became managing director in 1950, and it was he who would oversee the firm's meteoric rise.

Bower had a principled approach to business, and felt that management consulting should adhere to the same standards of conduct and professionalism as law and medicine. He outlined several core policies for the firm: that client interests must take precedence over company interest; that the returns to a client from a project should always exceed the fees generated; that only active partners can hold ownership in the firm; and that staff must be prepared to do superior work while remaining loyal to the firm.

The MBA draft

Another of Bower's policies that diverged from industry convention at the time was the willingness, sometimes verging on preference, to hire recent MBAs from top schools, as opposed to experienced managers from other organizations. Bower reasoned that demand for seasoned talent would too quickly eclipse supply, leaving mediocre candidates with high price tags who would turn out to be poor investments. Moreover, recent graduates could offer fresh ideas and insights, rather than replicating old, predictable methods that had been entrenched by years of rote service.

In recent years, McKinsey has begun hiring more broadly from graduate programs in law, medicine, engineering, science and liberal arts, although around half of its consultants with a graduate degree still hold MBAs. And business school graduates like the firm as much as it likes them—a 2007 survey by employer research firm Universum revealed that McKinsey was the second most desirable place to work (behind Google). Before 2007, the firm had held the top seed for 12 consecutive years. In the 2007 survey's breakdown by industry, McKinsey was named the No. 1 most desirable consulting house to work for.

Go forth and be CEO

Perhaps one of the reasons the firm is so attractive is that it has a record of sending its consultants off to top positions at other companies. McKinsey alumni include Bengt Baron, CEO and president of Absolut Vodka, Greg Case, CEO and president of Aon Corp., Gary Rogers, chairman of Levi Strauss & Co., Jonathan I. Schwartz, CEO of Sun Microsystems, Luis Ubinas, president of the Ford Foundation, and Joergen Knudstorp, CEO of LEGO Group, among many others. The firm's former consultants number over 19,000 around the world.

Form and function

McKinsey categorizes its practices by function and industry. The functional areas are business technology, corporate finance, marketing and sales, operations, organization, risk and strategy. Its industry coverage encompasses 15 different sectors—some of them commodity-oriented, such as energy and materials, retail and consumer packaged goods, and others service-oriented, such as telecom, health care payor/provider, and banking and finance. Also counted among the industry practice areas are the public and social sectors, focusing on the firm's work with entities outside the realm of pure commerce, including government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

Quietly taking all comers

McKinsey takes on clients under nonexclusive terms, making it possible for different teams of consultants to advise competing organizations simultaneously. Despite the potential for conflicts of interest, McKinsey's looming reputation often motivates companies, in the fashion of "keeping up with the Joneses," to hire the firm themselves after hearing that their rivals have done so. While it is likely aware of this advantageous gossip, McKinsey enforces confidentiality of its client list, and forbids consultants from discussing projects between teams and engagements. To further shore up the confidence of clients, employees are also subject to a sector freeze, a kind of mini-exclusivity by which they must not advise direct competitors within a reasonable period of time (often two years). In extreme cases, a consultant may have to agree never to work with a competitor.

A change in the air

In 2007, McKinsey established a special climate change initiative to address challenges associated with the move to a low-carbon economy. Seventy clients were advised in this area in just the first half of 2007. Over 750 employees are participating in the new effort, chosen for their backgrounds in climate science and environmental economics, as well as other relevant disciplines like waste engineering, oceanography science, numeric weather modeling, international affairs, agriculture and forestry, and nuclear or fuel cells. Some consultants carry hands-on experience from waste management in Chile and financial restructuring in China, as well as time spent with renewable energy departments of global petroleum companies and the UN Development Program in the Congo.

The initiative brings to bear McKinsey's expertise on abatement cost curves (a fact-based understanding of the size and cost of measures for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions), process changes, emissions trading, biofuel options and new asset valuation in light of regulatory changes. Its client roster is not limited to corporations—the development of seven country-specific (Germany, the U.S., the U.K., the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand and Japan) abatement cost curves is underway or, for some countries, already completed.

In other lands

McKinsey reportedly generates more than 60 percent of its revenue from non-U.S. engagements, a staggering figure for a company that had few international offices prior to the 1990s (it expanded into 20 new countries in that decade alone). One region of particular focus is Asia. In 2004, the firm launched Asia House, a talent cultivation program meant to take advantage of shared opportunities between Europe and Asia. Though it began as a joint effort between the Frankfurt office and the Greater China offices, Asia House has since grown to include the majority of locations in Asia, with the European partnership expanding into the Swiss, French, Benelux and Scandinavian offices. Most Asia House clients are based in Asia and Europe, but engagements sometimes spread to the Middle East and North America.

Asia House consultants are hired directly into a two- to three-year program, the first year of which is carried out in Frankfurt or Paris, followed by an assignment in Asia. Formal training complements the actual project engagements to ensure well-rounded progress. As of the end of 2007, participating consultants represented nine nationalities and spoke two to five languages each. At that time, Asia House had completed over 200 engagements in 20 countries, working in multiple industries, including the key sectors of chemicals, financial services and telecom.

Forever entangled

McKinsey's reputation, while impressive and no doubt envied by other consulting firms, is not entirely untarnished. For one thing, the firm can never undo or escape its connection to the disgraced energy company Enron. Not only was Enron one of its biggest clients before the bankruptcy, but Enron CEO Jeff Skilling was another of those McKinsey alumni who ascended to the corporate heavens. Due to Skilling's influence, many other former consultants had also joined the Enron ranks, and McKinsey's name inevitably came up during the trial. The firm was not and is not itself under suspicion of fraud or corruption, however.

Without a home

McKinsey claims to have no headquarters. The base of operations for former Managing Director Rajat Gupta was for many years New York, and that holds true for the London office, now that Ian Davis is at the helm, but the company is officially run as a decentralized partnership, allowing for a global network of staff who can be chosen based on suitability for a project, rather than geographic availability. The managing director is elected for a three-year term, following a vote by current directors. The office holds a three-term limit.

Davis was elected managing director in July 2003, and is in the midst of his second term. He joined the company almost 30 years ago, and was manager of the London office prior to his election. He holds an undergraduate degree in politics, philosophy and economics from Balliol College at Oxford University. Along with his position at McKinsey, Davis serves on a number of nonprofit boards, including the Board of Trustees of The Conference Board, the International Business Council of the World Economic Forum, the Presidents Council of the University of Tokyo, the Cambridge University Judge Business School Advisory Board, and the International Business Leaders Advisory Council for the Mayor of Beijing.

Knowledge factory

McKinsey experts frequently produce works of business scholarship, whether in the form of reports and studies, or in the pages of the *McKinsey Quarterly*, the firm's business journal and platform for expounding on issues of management, strategy and finance. The publication also includes articles by external experts. Print and online subscription to the *Quarterly* can be had for a mere \$150 a year, although a rotating selection of articles from each issue is available online, free of charge. Translations of selected pieces are also available in Russian, Spanish and Chinese. The February 2008 issue featured a piece on how to ameliorate consumer worries over climate change, as current conditions have led to mistrust of large corporations. Another article examined long-term trends in global capital markets, using data from McKinsey Global Institute, the company's global economics research arm.

McKinsey consultants have also written a number of best-selling business books. One of the earliest and most widely known examples is Thomas Peters' and Robert Waterman Jr.'s *In Search of Excellence*, a 1982 tome that identified the unique strengths of American companies, reigniting confidence in domestic business at a time when Japan seemed to have an unshakeable advantage. It went on to become one of the highest selling business books in publishing history. More recently, in 2007, Jimmy Hexter and Jonathan Woetzel came out with *Operation China: From Strategy to Execution*, arguing that the market in China has matured to a point that it is now one of the most important in the world. *The Granularity of Growth*, by Sven Smit, Patrick Viguerie and Mehrdad Bagai was published in 2008. Based on an extensive quantitative study, it offers insights on the means by which large companies can achieve growth.

Social betterment

The company's social sector practice is divided into global public health (GPH), economic development and opportunity creation (EDOC), education and philanthropy. GPH focuses on four issues: facilitating the introduction of new products and technologies, promoting the involvement of the private sector in health care concerns, improving health systems in developing countries, and assisting collaborations and partnerships aimed at global health efforts. EDOC advises clients seeking to bring economic opportunities to, and improve the well-being of, the disadvantaged in both developing and developed countries. In education, McKinsey works in all geographies to improve access to quality education for K-12 students. Philanthropy works to boost the

impact of social capital by applying strategy, performance management and program design to public and private entities, including single individuals.

McKinsey also has a community fellows program, through which employees can volunteer to work exclusively on nonprofit engagements for six to nine months. All McKinsey offices work with nonprofit and/or public-sector organizations in their local communities. Nearly 50 percent of the firm's consultants participate in this work during their tenure with McKinsey, and many others serve as board members of nonprofits.

Investigating the world economy

Since 1990, the firm has operated the McKinsey Global Institute, a research group concentrating on critical economic trends around the world. All MGI studies are funded by McKinsey partners, rather than by an outside business, government or other entity. It is staffed by consultants serving assignments of six months to one year, after which they return to client work. A July 2007 MGI study on energy conservation found that the U.S. has the lowest energy productivity of any developed economy. Energy productivity is the degree of output captured from energy consumed—in other words, and this may come as a shock, the U.S. wastes energy. It also produces twice as much carbon dioxide as Northwestern Europe or Japan. The same study, however, concluded that available technologies could be utilized to both cap U.S. energy demand (currently growing at 1.1 percent per year) and to significantly boost energy productivity.

A study from January 2007 revealed that the U.S. health care system is far more costly than that of comparable nations due to inflated doctor pay, overconsumption of certain services and a lack of incentive for patients to make value-conscious decisions. Other recent issues investigated by MGI are capital markets, consumer demand and demographics, and global economic integration.

GETTING HIRED

If it ain't broke

Insiders say that the hiring process at McKinsey—which we're told has "remained basically unchanged over the last 10 years"—is "rigorous but fair," and usually involves "upwards of five interviews over two to three rounds." The interviews themselves test "for problem-solving, leadership and people skills." Sources note that "McKinsey is looking for problem solvers who are also great communicators."

No surprises here

MBA candidates "generally go through two rounds with three cases apiece," whereas non-MBAs follow the "same process, but with one additional round of interviews preceding the usual two rounds." That additional round "involves a written multiple-choice exam and several breakout groups with mini-cases." The firm "explains everything along the way," so there are "no surprises and no tricks." Straightforward as they may be, interviews "do challenge your conceptual thinking," and "all candidates are held to a high bar across offices." As one staffer bluntly puts it, "McKinsey runs a very structured interview process, so if you're looking for an 'in,' forget it—just nail the cases and be a normal person."

The firm recruits at schools nationwide, but "instead of just going to the top-10 schools," it looks "for the top students at other schools."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Top of the heap

McKinsey's "collaborative and caring" environment is "filled with supersmart, motivated people who are fun to work with," insiders say. "The culture is really open and sharing," insists a recent hire, adding, "At any time, you can call anyone in the firm and they'll lend you a hand." Others rave about "working with unparalleled people" and "getting to interact with top management at top-tier companies." "McKinsey is an amazing place to work. If you have the energy, the willingness to travel and an interest in business, there is no better place to be a consultant," boasts an insider.

And even those who end up leaving the firm usually do so on a positive note. An associate explains, "They want you to like them even when you're gone." He adds that the firm "really tries to cultivate its alumni base," and "makes a lot of effort to make sure people stay connected after they leave."

"Make your own McKinsey"

There are "far fewer rules in a place like McKinsey than in a lot of other settings," a staffer remarks. "The people who are happiest and most successful here long term understand that, and they are entrepreneurs within the firm. If you have an idea and it drives client impact, you can find support for it." A colleague agrees, stating, "At McKinsey, you have the ability to follow your passion, do what you want, where you want it, sample different industries, functions, geographies—it really gives you an opportunity to be entrepreneurial. There's a saying here, 'Make your own McKinsey'—and I've found this to be true." Others agree that the freedom they have at McKinsey is a strong firm benefit.

No cookie-cutter consultants

We're also told that McKinsey is "very diverse at all levels." Consultants "come from very diverse backgrounds and have lots of passions," which, in a nutshell, means "there is no typical McKinsey consultant." An insider states, "I haven't yet met a McKinsey consultant who didn't have an impact in his/her job, but if you just look at a community lunch, you're going to find a wide variety of backgrounds—cultural, geographic, educational, professional backgrounds and interests." In addition, one longtimer notes that hiring and promoting women is "one of our biggest priorities," and adds that women comprise "40 percent or more of our intake." Others agree that "there are a lot of women associates and analysts who are taking leadership positions." We're also told "there is a ton of racial diversity" at the firm, as well as "plenty of representation within" the GLBT community. With respect to the latter, a partner muses, "I think we were the first to really take initiative here."

Get your mini-MBA

McKinsey's diversity is especially apparent during training programs. One recent hire says that at his initial training, "there were 40 people," adding, "I think four of them were American." And although the firm is "such a big organization and spread around the world," it's also the case that "everyone goes through the same trainings together," providing consultants with a shared experience and a common foundation.

Training is not only a good way to bring everyone together, but it also helps to ensure that "the learning never stops." In fact, "the firm has a ton of formal training programs at all tenure levels, and virtually all of them are excellent." For example, there's no need to come in to McKinsey with a business background, since the firm holds a three-week course, referred to as a "mini-MBA," that covers "foundations of business concepts" for those who need them. Associates can expect to receive up to five weeks of formal training in their first two years; as one staffer observes, "That's a huge investment from McKinsey to pay me up front and be trained for that long."

How much is too much?

But McKinsey doesn't stop there. "They'll have random, one-week trainings on little things, and then there are online training opportunities daily, literally. On top of that, there are all the foundational, institutionalized online trainings." One source shares, "I came in not knowing a lot about Excel. It's just amazing how many resources there are available for us to learn about Excel—I was sent to online training, but there's also face-to-face training and you can even call our IT analytics group at any time of day and ask for help, and they'll take control of your computer and help you out. There are significant resources to help you address your gaps and manage time as well." In fact, many respondents agree that "the opportunity for training usually exceeds the time available to take that training."

On a less formal note, McKinsey also has a solid mentoring system. That being said, warns a staffer, "The amount of informal training varies depending on the nature of the senior staff on the study—some are willing to spend a ton of time mentoring, and others are less interested." Overall, though, says an Atlanta-based insider, "Training is nicely balanced between on the job and formal." Not to mention, adds a colleague, "We're thrust into client relationships from day one."

Rate your supervisor

Sources say McKinsey's meritocratic culture offers "lots of opportunities for development," as well as "recognition" for hard work. It is also "strictly up or out" when it comes to progressing up the food chain, and "promotions generally occur every 24 months or so." A consultant notes, however, that "the speed of progression depends on economic conditions." There are few surprises in the process, as there's plenty of "very honest feedback all along the way."

And the feedback goes both ways—we're told that "after every engagement, consultants are asked to fill out an evaluation of all the leaders on our teams (direct manager, his direct manager and the senior guy on the project, as well as partners)." In fact, says an associate, "In some cases, we're asked if an individual should be made director." As a result, comments a recent hire, "all the higher-ups know that their future rests in our hands, to a certain extent." Perhaps because of that (or perhaps just out of the kindness of their heart), another newbie points out, "managers are always saying, 'How can I be helpful to you?'—this is a very common question, and coming from a supervisor, it's very refreshing to hear."

11 hours is a good day

For those who stick around, the "high-impact" projects McKinseyites work on usually span "eight to 12 weeks," which makes for an "intense" schedule. Average workweeks are typically 60 to 70 hours. In short, it can be "challenging to balance work and life." As one first-year states, "For McKinsey, 11 hours a day is a pretty light day."

But, an executive explains, "It is all about working smartly and setting the right boundaries." Another agrees that balance is "possible if you're willing to demonstrate a strong track record, and then assert your own boundaries and stick to your guns." Case in point, says a director: "I have raised two children that are now in college [while] working full time at McKinsey." A partner who reports working 70-hour weeks explains, "I try to keep my weekends free, but work very hard during the week." Others agree that "largely, weekend work is not required," and according to one consultant, "There's only been one instance where I've been asked to have a call or come in to work on a weekend."

In addition, an associate reports that McKinsey "recognizes that work/life balance is difficult," and says he is "impressed with how aggressively and openly the firm is addressing this." For example, we're told that each team has "team learnings," where "you sit down at the beginning and you talk about your personality type, working style (e.g., if you prefer to work out in the morning), and you can build your schedule around your needs. As long as you stand up for what you need, the firm will honor it." Plus, a colleague adds, "They've developed an initiative, 'Engagement 2.0,' which is supposed to be the next generation of how we should be running our engagements so that consultants aren't working 14 hours a day." Regardless of the success of the program, the source warns, "The people that McKinsey attracts are the people that want to get kudos for sending that e-mail at 3 a.m." Compounding that tendency is the fact that "part of what corporate America values about McKinsey is that they'll get e-mails in the morning from us, and it makes them feel justified for paying top dollar for our services." As a result, it may not be "within McKinsey's power to completely change how engagements are run."

Frequent fliers

Insiders also note that “travel is an inherent part of life as a McKinsey consultant,” and the constant movement can be “painful,” at times. The common schedule of travel “four days a week, nearly every week, is pretty tough on most folks,” says a recent hire. He adds, dramatically, “Travel is what eventually will drive me out.”

But others say time on the road is “overall very manageable,” like a partner who explains, “I have learned to stay efficient and productive when I travel.” As one director sees it, “Consulting is a contact sport. I love being with my clients.” It helps that “very rarely will you fly out on a Sunday and very rarely will you fly back on a Friday.” Plus, we’re told “there is an effort to staff locally if that’s what you want.” McKinsey’s “geographic scale makes travel an option if you want it, but not if you don’t,” explains a partner in New York. A colleague agrees, “Travel is intense, but this is my own choice (the type of clients I serve).” “If you’re up to the task of travel, great,” exclaims an associate, adding, “otherwise, either focus on a sector with a strong local client base (e.g., finance in New York) or get out.”

Fewer hours on the road

Another respondent notes that “the firm is generally very supportive of helping consultants find work schedules/positions that will work with their family situations.” Others agree, citing McKinsey’s offer of “flexible paternity/maternity arrangements, e.g., no travel.” Furthermore, notes a San Francisco-based staffer, “the firm has started a new initiative to try to manage down teams’ travel time and help senior firm members be more responsive to working concerns of engagement managers and team members.” A colleague explains that this program is intended “to change travel from rule to necessity, so you’re only at the client when you need to be.” “So for instance,” he reports, “if we need to be at the client site five days a week, the team might separate so not everyone has to be there the whole week—you just rotate. So you’ll be traveling two or three days, instead of four or five days a week.” “The funny thing is,” warns a co-worker, “we actually work more hours when we’re local than when we’re on the road.” But “when you’re not traveling, there’s no requirement to work from the office. You can be flexible when you’re not on the client site,” another staffer explains.

The big payoff

Many staffers say McKinsey’s competitive salaries make up for the late nights. One recent hire says of his initial offer, “Overall, the package was very strong and comparable to other firms in the industry.” Others agree that the “bonus and perks are very healthy.” More specifically, the firm offers a “sign-on bonus and year-end bonus,” in addition to “an embedded bonus that they don’t talk about.” On top of that, up to 12 percent of compensation is contributed to a pension/401(k), and “profit sharing kicks in starting at the associate principal level (fractional equity), and then scales up after one becomes elected as a partner.”

But what really gets consultants excited are the perks. A senior business analyst insists, “We’re in the top 5 percent of all companies in terms of how we’re taken care of in perks.” For example, McKinsey offers “full medical/dental/vision coverage.” As one staffer raves, “The health care plan has got to be one of the premier health care plans in any American company. Not only can you go anywhere you want for almost nothing, but for eye care, we get \$500 every year to spend any way we want. Plus, my wife gets the same deal. At the partner level, it even gets better.” Staffers can also apply for a one-time, low-interest home loan. And, on a more exciting note, each office is taken on retreats to destinations like “Hawaii, Cancun, etc.” An insider adds, “There’s also a lot of fun social stuff going on, too. This weekend we have an office picnic—a Braves game—so we get seats and food, and families can join.”

Making a difference

Respondents tell us the firm has a “huge involvement” in community initiatives—“everything from the most local level to global efforts on development and public health.” McKinsey also sponsors “much pro bono work,” as well as “board memberships in not-for-profits.” In fact, says one staffer in Atlanta, “If you’re really excited about community service or nonprofit work, you have the opportunity to do that full time” through the community fellows program.

The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.

One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: (617) 973-1200
Fax: (617) 973-1339
www.bcg.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (HQ)
66 offices in 38 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Functional Practice Areas

Corporate Development
Information Technology
Marketing & Sales
Operations
Organization
Strategy

Industry Practice Areas

Consumer
Energy
Financial Institutions
Health Care
Industrial Goods
Insurance
Technology, Media & Telecommunications

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: Carl Stern
CEO & President: Hans-Paul Bürkner
2008 Employees: 4,500 (consulting staff only)
2007 Employees: 3,900 (consulting staff only)
2007 Revenue: \$2.3 billion
2006 Revenue: \$1.8 billion



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Extremely good culture and consulting style"
- "Arrogant, high society of consulting"
- "Great benefits, treat their people well"
- "Ideas ... less action"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

- #3 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting
- #4 – Energy Consulting
- #4 – Financial Consulting
- #8 – Economic Consulting
- #8 – Operational Consulting

Quality of Life

- #3 – Offices
- #4 – Formal Training
- #5 – Compensation
- #9 – Best Firms to Work For
- #10 – Overall Satisfaction
- #11 – Firm Culture
- #11 – Interaction with Clients
- #13 – Relationships with Supervisors

Diversity

- #5 – Diversity for GLBT
- #7 – Best Firms for Diversity
- #9 – Diversity for Minorities
- #11 – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- "Prestige and pride"
- "CEO agenda issues to tackle"
- Minimal internal politics
- "A great place to learn and be mentored"

DOWNERS

- "Little opportunity for exposure to nascent companies"
- Emphasis on PowerPoint
- "Not-so-clear criteria for promotion"
- "Culture can tend toward the workaholic"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.bcg.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Purveyor of ideas

The Boston Consulting Group is one of the most widely known management consulting firms in the world. Though only midsized among its peer group of major global consultancies, the firm has a reputation for keen insight, having originated the concepts of the growth-share matrix (a shorthand graphic reference for optimal use of resources), the experience curve (a charting of the favorable relationship between expenses and production volume—that is, the more often a process is carried out, the less it costs) and time-based competition (an approach that recognizes speed as an essential component of success). More recent concepts have included deconstruction of value chains, the economics of information (richness versus reach), the change curve (depicting the human side of change management), and the cash curve (an approach to ensuring payback on innovation). As BCG puts it, “Our objective is not to simply apply best practice, but to invent it.”

The firm supports a number of broad functional practice areas, including corporate development, IT, marketing and sales, operations, organization and strategy, as well as more specialized niches, such as globalization, innovation, M&A, postmerger integration, intellectual property and turnaround/restructuring. Its consultants’ expertise falls in a wide range of industry categories, such as automotive, consumer, energy, financial institutions, health care, insurance, media, oil, private equity, retail, technology and telecommunications, and travel and tourism. The firm is also active in the social sector, advising on public education, world hunger and global health.

Yesterday Boston, today the world

BCG was founded in 1963 by Bruce D. Henderson, a former bible salesman and Harvard B-school dropout. Henderson was challenged by the CEO of The Boston Safe Deposit & Trust Company to form a consulting arm for the organization. His first month’s billings amounted to \$500, and by the end of the year, the lone Boston office had a staff of two. Henderson’s growth strategy was aggressive, recruiting heavily from top business schools and encouraging novel thinking. In 1966, the firm acquired TFM Adams, Ltd., a small consultancy in Tokyo. This initial expansion abroad—and just its second office—made BCG the first Western business advisor in Japan. An office was opened in London in 1970, broadening the firm’s access to Europe (it had opened a small office in Milan in the mid-1960s).

Another landmark event was the departure, in 1973, of Bill Bain and a small group of executives. This group subsequently founded Bain & Company, which stands today as a major BCG rival. Then, in 1979, in part because of an employee stock ownership plan put in place four years earlier, staff were collectively able to buy out the firm from The Boston Company. At the start of this new independence, the company still had fewer than 300 consultants. This was short-lived, however, as through the 1980s BCG opened one new office per year, on average. This impressive expansion was eclipsed the following decade, when the firm opened multiple offices almost every year. From 1995 to 1997 alone, locations were added in Atlanta, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Helsinki, Jakarta, Lisbon, Mumbai, Oslo, São Paulo, Singapore, Stuttgart, Vienna, Warsaw and Washington, D.C. Openings were also steady, if less frenzied, in the 2000s, and were more concentrated in the U.S. Today, the company has 66 offices in 38 countries, and roughly 4,500 consultants.

All in one volume

In 2006, the company released *The Boston Consulting Group on Strategy*, a best-of collection, of sorts. The book selects from 40 years of brainstorming and business analysis from the thinkers who produced the growth-share matrix and the notion of time-based competition. Carl Stern, the company chairman, and Mike Deimler, a senior partner and global leader of the strategy practice, chose the featured pieces, and each provide commentary and updates throughout the volume. Aimed at executives and entrepreneurs across all industries, the anthology offers both the now-established wisdom as the company conceived it years ago, as well as more recent thoughts on the state of business. The themes, in many cases, have remained consistent over the decades: Retain competitive advantage, break compromises, realize the value of time and remain aware of second- and third-order causes.

The cow doesn't jump, and the little dog's not laughing

Though it uses fanciful images—a cow, a dog and a star—the growth-share matrix is not a fairy tale. It is one of BCG's most penetrating insights, a graphic representation of money flow. The matrix is divided into four quadrants, split by an X axis of cash use (or growth rate) and a Y axis of cash generation (or market share). Cash cows, in the bottom left quadrant, are low growth rate, high market share pursuits—usually established products in mature markets that require minimal additional investment but generate powerful sales. Cash cows turn the wheels of a company, paying overhead and daily expenses. Above the cows on the matrix are stars, areas of high growth and high market share. Stars use and produce large amounts of money, and are usually destined to become cows as the market matures. If the market sours, however, they can become dogs—residing in the bottom right quadrant. Dogs are not investment-intensive, but provide little return. Dogs, though not necessarily a waste of money, are a waste of time. In the remaining quadrant are question marks, requiring large amounts of cash but generating very little. These are money pits that must be avoided.

BCG's concept of time-based competition flew in the face of the notion that success was primarily the result of providing high value at low cost. The firm added the dimension of time, claiming that success is the result of providing high value at low cost, in the quickest amount of time. Faster business cycles mean carrying less inventory, a shorter cash flow cycle and more precise purchase decisions, to say nothing of the improvement in customer experience.

Ode to business

To create a forum and storehouse for strategic discussion, BCG established the Strategy Institute in 1998. The institute focuses on nontraditional and nonbusiness sources, particularly scholars, but also artists and doctors. It sponsors frequent research projects, for which outside experts are paired with BCG staff. Each project's development is monitored through institute meetings worldwide, with teams presenting their findings at key points of progression. Research results are published and shared with clients, though the company promises that any outside team member who participates in an institute project will retain the rights to his or her idea, and can take part in guiding its implementation. Recent publications produced by Strategy Institute collaborations include Bolko von Oetinger's "Center and Periphery," an article detailing the importance of identifying vulnerabilities, especially for companies holding a dominant position in a market, published in June 2007, and a November 2006 article, "Constructing Strategic Spaces"—a meditation by Tiha von Ghyczy on the importance of the actual spaces (physical, social and representational) in which we choose to think and create.

In the primo offices

Running the firm is Hans-Paul Bürkner, who has stood as president and CEO since 2003. Bürkner came onboard in 1981 in the Munich office, and took part in the opening of the Düsseldorf and Frankfurt offices in 1982 and 1991, respectively. Before assuming the role of CEO (the company's first European chief executive), he was a senior partner and global leader of the financial services practice. Bürkner's educational background encompasses economics, business administration and the Chinese language, all studied in the course of completing degrees at Germany's University of Bochum, Yale and, on a Rhodes Scholarship, Oxford. In 2003, *Consulting* magazine ranked him No. 1 on its list of the year's Top 25 Most Influential Consultants.

Bürkner's predecessor is current Chairman Carl Stern, a graduate of Harvard and Stanford Business School. Based in the Chicago office, Stern can frequently be spotted as the featured speaker at management conferences worldwide, and remains actively involved in the firm's strategy practice.

Everyday economics

BCG created a stir in 2003 with the publication of the business best seller *Trading Up: The New American Luxury*, a book by Senior Partner Michael J. Silverstein and former Partner Neil Fiske, which looks at the upward trend in American spending on luxury goods. The catch is that they're not buying the old luxuries—yachts and original works of art—but rather a new category of middle-class luxury items like computerized appliances, golf clubs and gourmet coffee. Silverstein and Fiske argue that the

need for some luxury items becomes normalized, allowing retailers of these middle-class luxuries to reap enormous profits through selling high volumes at a premium. The book was awarded the American Marketing Association's Berry-AMA prize in 2004.

As the economy has worsened through the decade, however, consumers have changed their spending habits. Enter Silverstein once again, this time with 2006's *Treasure Hunt: Inside the Mind of the New Consumer*, which delves into the developing trend of trading down, wherein consumers hunt for bargains and discounts on items similar to their now difficult-to-afford luxuries.

Book club

Another well-known book by BCG consultants is *Hardball*, a 2004 treatise on the value of aggressive business tactics by George Stalk, a senior partner, and Rob Lachenauer, who has since left the firm. The book's teasing subtitle, *Are You Playing to Play or Playing to Win?*, hints at the shake-up the authors intend, since they believe corporations have wasted energy on "soft" issues of internal culture and positive public image when, instead, they should have been focused on outpacing the competition. The book outlines a strategy for those seeking to play harder and isolate winning as the main goal. In January 2008, Stalk returned with another book, *Five Future Strategies You Need Right Now*, which is part of Harvard Business Press' new series, "Memo to the CEO." In the book, Stalk discusses five strategies that have not yet become widely practiced, but are nonetheless worthy of top executives' attention. The topics include "supply chain gymnastics," "dynamic pricing" and "embracing complexity."

In 2007, Senior Partners James P. Andrew and Harold L. Sirkin published *Payback: Reaping the Rewards of Innovation*. The book suggests that innovation is validated only when it brings about higher profits. The authors discuss the need for balance between the cost of innovation and the reward at the other end (the "payback"). *BusinessWeek* named *Payback* one of the 10-best books on innovation in 2007.

Most recently, June 2008 saw the publication of *GLOBALITY: Competing with Everyone from Everywhere for Everything*, by Senior Partners Sirkin and James W. Hemerling and Partner Arindam Bhattacharya. The book addresses what comes after globalization, and tells the story of a new era of international business competition, in which companies from rapidly developing economies (RDEs)—dubbed "the global challengers" by the authors—are competing with larger corporations in developed countries for customers, suppliers, resources, intellectual property, people and, ultimately, industry leadership.

Soft covers

In addition to books, BCG produces surveys and studies on popular business topics. In March 2008, the firm released "The BCG 50 Local Dynamos: How Dynamic RDE-based Companies Are Mastering Their Home Markets—and What MNCs Need to Learn from Them," which identifies 50 companies in RDEs that are mastering their domestic markets and beating out powerful multinational companies. This report was the basis of an article in the March 2008 issue of *Harvard Business Review*, titled, "How Local Companies Keep Multinationals at Bay," authored by BCG Senior Partner David Michael and Partner Bhattacharya. The following month, the firm published a report, titled "Creating People Advantage: How to Address HR Challenges Worldwide Through 2015," on the most pressing HR issues facing major countries and industries worldwide, such as the risks of an aging workforce and the scarcity of specialized talent.

The company keeps an eye on other organizations as well. For example, it partners annually with *BusinessWeek* to rank the world's most innovative companies. The 2008 list, topped by Apple for the third straight year, was compiled from survey responses of almost 2,500 executives worldwide. Google landed in the No. 2 slot, with Toyota, GE and Microsoft rounding out the top five.

Making the grade

BCG tends to appear on a few annual lists itself. *Fortune* named it 11th overall in its 2008 ranking of the 100 Best Companies to Work For. This was the best performance by a consulting firm, and marks the third consecutive year BCG placed near the top of the list. *Fortune* also singled out the firm as the No. 1 small company for the second straight year. The publication pointed

out the company's strong diversity, high pay and attractive health care benefits as reasons for its solid showing. *Working Mother* magazine also gave BCG a repeat honor, identifying it in 2007 as a Best Company for Working Mothers, just as it had in 2006. BCG was lauded for its flexible scheduling and telecommuting policies, as well as its supportive culture.

Individuals shine at the firm, too. *Consulting* magazine has repeatedly dished out honors to BCG consultants. In 2007, it named two senior partners—Steve Gunby and Sharon Marcil—to its annual top-25 consultants list and gave Marcil a special women leaders award for client service. Then, in 2008, the magazine selected Antonella Mei-Pochtler for the top-25 list and honored retiring BCG Senior Partner Jeanie Duck with its second annual Lifetime Achievement Award for women leaders.

Strategy for society

Acknowledging its responsibility as a global entity, BCG has a very structured approach to what it calls “social impact” work. The firm engages in a large number of charitable and socially conscious initiatives on a global scale. It advises governments and institutions on issues of hunger and international development, and maintains partnerships with the World Food Programme, which fights world hunger, and Save the Children, a charity for disadvantaged children. It also assists in global health concerns, designing strategies to best combat infectious diseases like malaria, and advising on means of enhancing access to and delivery of care. In addition, consultants help a wide range of local organizations, especially in the fields of education, community development, culture, the arts and the environment.

GETTING HIRED

Breaking the recruiting mold

While BCG is known for keeping its eye on “top-10 MBA schools” and the country’s “top undergraduate and graduate institutions,” sources say “many more undergraduate institutions and local schools” are now reaching the firm’s radar. Of course, the likes of Columbia, Stanford and Yale remain popular feeders, as do Harvard, Brown and Northwestern, insiders point out. That said, respondents tell us regional offices are frequently turning to institutions like Duke, Georgia Tech and the University of Michigan for candidates as well. For interested applicants at even “lesser-known ones, we look at the Dean’s list”—so be sure to hit the books!

“We definitely recruit at other [schools],” one source declares, and another notes a recent “aggressive expansion into nontraditional backgrounds—PhDs, MDs and JDs.” What’s more, BCG hiring is “open to all candidates if they just apply via the company web site.” Adds a colleague, “The most important qualities BCG seeks are enthusiasm, an ability to think critically and analytically, poise, presence, clear communication skills and an inquisitive mind.”

Get on the case

Interviewing is an “extremely well-organized process,” insiders say, normally with “two rounds of interviews.” The first round of “two 45-minute interviews” is conducted by project leaders, principals and a few second-year consultants. This primary round “focuses on intellectual horsepower, with a combination of case interview and fit” questions; one insider estimates that each first-round interview consists of “10 to 15 minutes of fit and a 25- to 30-minute case discussion, and then an opportunity at the end for the candidate to ask questions.”

For the second round, which is held in a BCG office, “principals and partners” do the interviewing—hence the nickname “decision round.” That’s usually three or four interviews following a format similar to the first round. “All interviews have a business case,” a principal says, and case questions always stem from “real-world cases the interviewers have encountered, so ambiguity is almost guaranteed.”

No cute Qs

“Expect questions about sources of profitability, market sizing, price approaches, cost structure and growth opportunities,” an insider tips. While the cases “are not trick questions or cutesy brainteasers,” they will require quantitative skills, sources insist. A consultant says, “The cases tend to be practical and a forum for you to show how you can logically dissect a problem and communicate.” “Questions will depend on the case,” but sources recall being asked questions of this sort: “Would you keep or sell company X?” “Would you invest in electric car research and development back in 1994?” “Would you relocate or outsource a given activity?” “Company X’s profits are falling, but they have been selling more cars—why?” “This company wants to get rid of its third-party distributor. Good idea?”

Mixing work and play

A summer internship at BCG is “a great experience that’s exactly like full time,” a former intern claims, as interns spend their time “on a real case with a real team and a real client.” “I truly felt like part of the consulting staff on that team,” says a source. “I had a module and was expected to deliver results like anyone else. However, everyone was very supportive, trying to make sure I succeeded.” Another employee agrees, “Partners and managers were very supportive and encouraging in the work I was doing. They wanted to make sure that I got a good perspective on both the work and the culture of the firm. They encouraged me to get involved with a lot of activities in the office, like pro bono work.”

Besides the real work and mentorship, interns can enjoy “good exposure in both directions”—to BCG management and to clients—as well as “an incredible amount of social activities.” “There are designated social events pretty much once a week or more, which are very fun,” raves one insider. By the end of the summer, “You get a strong sense of the culture and the people,” concludes another.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Balancing standards and stress

There’s “no one mold that you need to fit into” at BCG, where employees say “you can be yourself.” “It’s a collection of individuals,” a source says, and this lack of “a type” makes for “a very comfortable atmosphere.” BCGers describe themselves as “open and tolerant,” as well as “curious, driven and respectful.” And while the firm is “collegial and supportive,” its defining characteristic may be the “driven, intellectually stimulating, performance-oriented” vibe, a consultant notes. “Expectations are high, and there is little tolerance for doing your work without thinking hard.”

Though many at the firm report being constantly aware of that pressure to perform, there’s also an “emphasis on personal growth and feedback.” A contact says, “I feel that, as a new employee, I can approach almost anyone in the firm for advice, training or just an introduction.” And, adds a colleague, it’s “surprisingly humble and self-deprecating, given the level of talent here.”

What’s more, BCG makes an effort to keep employee stress at a reasonable level, given the nature of consulting. “It’s a tough job, and being a client business, the firm doesn’t always have control over some of the aspects of working here,” admits a source. “But they do control the culture, and they do an excellent job of it. People here very much live by the credo ‘don’t take yourself too seriously.’ We have costume contests and end-of-year video contests and, generally, a lot of fun with each other.”

You stay classy, BCG

Insiders give slightly above-average marks on compensation, noting that the BCG pay package includes a popular profit-sharing program—“traditionally 15 percent of base plus bonus.” Employees can also take advantage of “discount fitness club membership,” “holiday treats, office lunches and an annual team-building retreat.” A director calls BCG’s approach to extras “modest but generous,” saying office happy hours and other events are done “in a fun, classy, but not over-the-top way.”

In addition, many offices are equipped with ways to blow off steam: In Chicago, for example, “there is space in the office dedicated to downtime, with foosball, pool, pingpong and video games.” For R&R outside the office, folks get “great vacation, starting at 15 days a year and increasing to 20 after a couple years’ tenure.” Perhaps most importantly, a New York source says, “You can also become a points geek, and you do rack them up when traveling, which makes for good vacations.”

Top-notch health care

The serious raves start when respondents talk about their “near perfect” medical benefits that provide “very good quality” coverage for, well, almost nothing. “No premiums are paid by employees,” one source explains. Another cheers for “\$5 co-pays and easy access to specialists.” “Health insurance is very, very generous,” a principal says, adding that it “may be too much. Acupuncture is 100 percent reimbursed!”

Medical and family-related perks don’t end there: The “paid maternity and paternity leave” options get a round of thumbs-up, and a source says new parents have “options to take additional unlimited, unpaid time off.” (BCG is “very flexible in accommodating this stage in life,” a consultant insists.) Once the kiddies are a bit older, the firm provides “emergency child care arrangements.”

Don’t beach too long

While insiders report that there “genuinely is no average assignment,” most projects last about two to three months—though they can “range from three weeks to nine months.” We’re also told that downtime may be something of a misnomer at BCG. “The office is very busy,” says a source. “If not staffed, people are working on pro bono projects and proposals.” An associate estimates that “most employees spend four to eight weeks unstaffed each year, just enough for a break between each case.”

A certain amount of between-case time may be considered “beach time”—a form of “free vacation, basically.” However, admits a source, that’s “not entirely true, since you are always on call and you will find as soon as you settle into it, it’s over.” Another warns that beach time is “fun at first,” but may put some people “behind track for promotions” if it starts to take up too many days. “You go on the beach, then when you come back, teams look to staff people who have spent more time on cases,” an associate explains. “It becomes a vicious cycle.”

All over the map

Long hours are a fact of consulting life, but at BCG the time spent on the job isn’t the real problem. “It’s the variability that’s tricky, not the average number of hours worked,” a respondent remarks. Each week’s hours are “highly variable,” which means “it is not always easy to predict or plan” family or personal time. “In crunch times prior to major meetings, you can expect 60 to 65 hours per week,” says a project leader. “In slower times, you can do 40.” Others say they put in anywhere from 40 to 90 hours, but “typically under 64, with a lot of variability from 40 to 80.”

A consultant explains that work/life balance at the firm “depends on your own ability to push back on a few things while being extra-focused on the key deliverables.” Having “no face time” helps, as does the “very flexible” attitude regarding schedules. Calling the average week “demanding, but flexible,” one source notes, “I have dinner with my kids most nights, and weekend work is limited.” BCG “makes very strong efforts on this issue, and hours are tracked, with specific resolution measures taken if they are too long.” A Chicagoan adds that it’s possible “to get staffed on low-travel and local clients, particularly in my office, because it’s so big and there are a lot of options.” He adds, “The firm is very flexible when things in your life change and you have to be more local, like when I started a family.” Of course, “there are times that late-night or weekend work just can’t be helped,” but insiders believe “BCG is both appreciative and apologetic about these instances.”

Wanna go?

While some say “we staff regionally so there is less travel,” others point out that this really “depends on the office.” For example, “in New York there is a lot of local work, though in D.C. there is almost none.” Still, BCG has “a policy of working where we

are most efficient,” a principal explains. “Sometimes this is at the client, but many times it is in our office. There is no default model of being at the client site.” Naturally, time spent away from the home office is also “highly case-dependent.” One Los Angeles-based consultant has found that “travel cases are mostly all or nothing. Some cases require you to be at the client four days a week. Others have no travel requirement at all. In my 18 months at BCG, I have been on one—a six-week travel case. I have traveled for some other cases, but most of them were in the office.” Another estimates that in most offices, “only one in four cases is a travel case.” Overall, “they are good about not requiring you to travel when it’s not necessary,” opines an associate. “I think, compared to other firms, BCG excels in this area. There is some travel, but it is never excessive—and you can find ways to mitigate the amount of travel if you don’t want it.” Of course, travel is a perk for many consultants. A staffer who typically spends several days a week out of the office states, “I do not mind travel, and so I may have done more traveling than others.”

The diversity commitment

A source who’s been at the firm for nearly a decade says BCG has been working on women’s issues “for 15-plus years, and the past five have represented a genuine breakthrough. This is a great place for women now.” A much-praised women’s initiative “provides opportunities to connect with and learn from other women in the company,” and fosters “very close ties between women in the office and a number of senior role models.” Others laud recent recruiting efforts, which have resulted in an approximate 50/50 balance on the consultant level, though they observe that it’s still “unbalanced at the manager and partner level.” “I would very much like to see better retention,” a source states. A project leader claims there can be a “clubby culture that makes it more difficult for a woman to be successful and satisfied at BCG.” The bottom line is “there is still some work to do, but we’re working to improve,” a colleague comments.

When it comes to ethnic diversity, “the firm has really started to focus on this more over the past two years,” and sources believe BCG is “very committed to doing better.” “Recruiting, training and development efforts” are underway, but as a consultant says, “It is an area that needs improvement.” “We have an initiative, we are receptive, but it will take a while for BCG’s consultants to reflect the broader society,” admits a principal.

Meanwhile, high marks are extended to the firm’s GLBT community: “In a city like Atlanta, the conservative Bible Belt, the BCG culture is much more receptive than the general population,” a Georgia insider says. The “incredible,” “very open” GLBT network is “well funded to hold conferences and events,” and it’s “certainly a focus of recruiting.” “I have both out and closeted friends at BCG, and both have always felt very comfortable at the firm,” a source reports. GLBT staffers also “love the domestic partner benefits.”

Make room

“The company does its best to provide a good, healthy working environment,” and sources in a few regional offices say their environments are improving with new digs. In Chicago, BCG is “moving into a new office in a LEED building in 2009,” which insiders say should alleviate space shortages. Similarly, a source in Dallas says “BCG Texas is growing so fast that it’s getting crowded. The space issue is top of mind for the officers, and we are moving in 2009 to new premises.”

Those already settled in their space have positive things to say. A Toronto source raves about his “fantastic” office, where consultants “have foosball, Wii for the staff, a great kitchen and an excellent location.” The smaller Detroit office is “new and gorgeous,” while San Francisco’s “very comfortable space” boasts “the best view in the world: San Francisco Bay, from the Golden Gate to the Bay Bridge.” In Washington, D.C., “every consultant has a large window, and consultants share an office with project leaders, enabling frequent interactions and mentorship. Offices are modern and airy, with lots of natural light. Partners’ offices are interspersed throughout office, and there is no hierarchy in the layout.” Better still, that office is technically “in Bethesda, Md.—a counter-commute from D.C. on the Metro.” The New York facility gets props for “good design that makes it easy to interact with colleagues”; a Big Apple consultant appreciates “a great view and privacy, with one officemate.” Last but not least, the recently renovated “excellent office space in Boston” wins praise all around: It’s “designed for how we work, with excellent social areas and very comfortable and practical furniture.”

The apprentices

At this firm, there's a "huge focus on training," and insiders say the people in charge of training have "enough authority to ensure that people are able to attend." On the formal side of things, employees can choose from "lots of global, regional and local training programs, as well as a rich array of online trainings and webinars," plus weekly e-seminars and trainings on "public speaking, slide writing and story-boarding." "In addition, at each promotion point, you receive two to three weeks of formal training," an insider notes. "The firm also has several lunches and breakfasts where case teams share their work and insight."

But it's the on-the-job learning that makes the difference for most people. Says a source, "The formal training is good, but the informal feedback and training I have received has been exceptional." "We believe this to be an apprenticeship business," explains a project leader. A principal elaborates: "Much of the most valuable training will be on the job. This is an expected part of partners', principals' and project leaders' job performance, and they are evaluated on it—downward and anonymous upward feedback. Our best people-developers are firm heroes; they get journeyman awards to celebrate apprenticeship."

Run with the big dogs

"Supervisors vary widely," of course, but one consultant claims they're "more good than bad." Well liked or not, upper management is "very easily accessible," which wins higher-ups kudos from those of lower rank. Explains a source, "There is a strong feedback culture. Indeed, supervisors are usually even receptive to upward feedback and suggestions." "For the most part, the people I work with—and they stress that it's with, not for—are awesome," a satisfied associate insists. "They're fun to be around, concerned with my personal development and great at what they do." A colleague reports a somewhat different experience: "Project leaders are extremely focused on development and helping you improve as a consultant. Interaction with partners could be better."

Exposure to clients is variable, too, and it "all depends on the case." Those who are "not traveling a lot" or staffed on a busy case team may find that their "client interaction has been limited." Conversely, those who do land the right assignments may well wind up with "unique exposure to the most senior executives." "As a first-year, I interacted with CEOs of clients on multiple occasions," one consultant says, and a co-worker shares: "As a first-year associate, I have already held meetings and have had many conversations with clients' senior vice presidents by myself. I am given as much responsibility as I desire and can handle." "You can work one-on-one with a CEO and CFO as new consultant," yet another young hire concludes. "Kind of daunting, but cool."

Helped up (or out)

We're told that promotion at BCG is an up-or-out ladder, but it can be flexible, sources claim. "If someone is falling behind their class, the firm provides opportunities and training to help them catch up." If that doesn't work out, "underperforming staff are typically counseled out." At least the process "doesn't feel competitive with peers, since there is room for everyone to get promoted if they perform well." Insiders report that "consultants usually move to the next position (if at all) between 24 and 30 months," though there is "some slide in promotion timelines possible." Between principal and partner it's "a three-year schedule, so the expected time to partner, post-MBA, is seven years," a respondent explains.

"The worst part about the promotion policy and career advancement is that an early bad case or a long period of beach time are severely detrimental," warns an associate, who further explains, "If you spend a lot of time on the beach, have a bad case, or both, it can be extremely difficult to come back."

Good, green work

"Pro bono work is extremely important to BCG," though some feel the firm "doesn't publicize it as well as some of the other firms." How does BCG give back? Consulting services, board sponsorship and membership, and community initiatives, to name a few ways. A source adds that the board fellowship program "places interested consultants and associates with nonprofit boards to get experience with board membership and, in exchange, work on a project for the organization."

This “strong commitment to social impact” is felt both at the local and global level; sources say BCG maintains “several global relationships” with international charities like the World Food Programme, Save the Children and several large foundations, like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Meanwhile, “local pro bono projects and volunteer opportunities” range from “building a playground to organizing annual holiday toy drives.” “The firm also supports individual efforts for community involvement through formal and informal means,” an insider notes. “People at the firm are very proud of this work,” adds a colleague, “and all consultants have the opportunity to get involved if they have interest in this area.”

Progressive work holds a formidable place in the BCG mentality, too. “We are also focused on environmental impacts, and closely monitor our ability to become greener as an office,” a consultant explains. “The firm has embraced being green,” confirms a partner, with “a strategy to become green in all of our activities and services. We also share this with our clients and help them in similar ways.”

131 Dartmouth Street
Boston, MA 02116
Phone: (617) 572-2000
Fax: (617) 572-2427
www.bain.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (HQ)
38 offices in 25 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Change Management
Corporate Renewal
Corporate Strategy
Cost & Supply Chain Management
Customer Strategy & Marketing
Growth Strategy
IT
Mergers & Acquisitions
Organization
Performance Improvement
Private Equity

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: Orit Gadiesh
Worldwide Managing Director: Steve Ellis
2008 Employees: 4,300
2007 Employees: 3,100 +



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Prestigious and cool"
- "Middle-child syndrome"
- "Strong firm culture, great benefits"
- "Lower levels = monkey see, monkey do"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

- #2 – Financial Consulting
- #3 – Energy Consulting
- #4 – Economic Consulting
- #4 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting
- #7 – Operational Consulting

Quality of Life

- #1 – Best Firms to Work For
- #1 – Formal Training
- #2 – Interaction with Clients
- #2 – Offices
- #2 – Overall Satisfaction
- #3 – Compensation
- #4 – Firm Culture
- #6 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #6 – Work/Life Balance
- #9 – Hours in the Office
- #13 – Travel Requirements

Diversity

- #3 – Best Firms for Diversity
- #3 – Diversity for GLBT
- #5 – Diversity for Minorities
- #8 – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- "Fantastic in-office atmosphere"
- "Access to global transfers at all levels"
- "A learning curve that never lets up"
- Less travel than at competitors

DOWNERS

- "Silly HR policies are obstacles more often than you'd expect"
- "No specialization until we're more senior"
- "Tenure-based promotion time lines"
- Pressure to socialize with co-workers outside the office

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.joinbain.com

THE SCOOP

No Bain, no gain

Bain & Company is a privately held management consultancy with 38 offices in 25 countries. Its services address corporate and organizational strategy, supply chain management, marketing, pricing, information technology, mergers and acquisitions, and business performance. In 35 years of operation, it has worked with more than 3,900 clients across a broad range of industries, including consumer products, energy and utilities, financial services, health care, mining, retail, technology and transportation, as well as the public sector.

According to Bain, the stock prices of its clients outperform the market four to one. The firm works with small and midsize companies more often than other firms of its size and prestige, but has also completed projects for Fortune 500 corporations and other high-profile organizations like De Beers, Dell, Ford, Charles Schwab, Starbucks and Del Monte.

Bain at the beginning

A group of former Boston Consulting Group partners, united under Bill Bain, founded Bain in 1973. The new firm followed some unconventional precepts at first. Clients were given code names to ensure confidentiality, and once signed on with the firm, enjoyed exclusivity within their industry, as advising competitors was thought to be a conflict of interest (a matter-of-fact notion, but one, then and now, that's almost unheard of). In addition, the firm rarely engaged in self-promotion or marketing, preferring instead to secure contracts through boardroom referrals, sometimes even after several weeks of free work to give clients a taste of what was in store.

The firm began to expand rapidly in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Revenue jumped 40 to 50 percent per year during the period, and offices sprang up in London, Munich, San Francisco and Tokyo. The one-client-per-sector rule was abandoned in the 1980s, although the firm hedged against conflicts of interest by altering its billing structure, introducing success fees and the option of equity compensation. Today, approximately 10 percent of Bain's revenue comes from success fees and minority equity stakes.

Get it together

One of Bain's most successful practices is mergers and acquisitions. It has evaluated over 30,000 acquisition targets, facilitated and guided more than 1,000 transactions worth over \$200 billion and advised on more than 2,000 private equity deals and assessments. Bain-approved investments repeatedly show up in the top 25 percent of all leveraged buyout deals. In an engagement with a global consumer products company, for example, Bain was charged with fully integrating the Asian operations of a multibillion-dollar acquisition. By the end, it had cut combined costs by 17 percent in 11 countries. The stock price of the client's locally traded subsidiaries showed double the growth of their rivals in those markets.

Financial finesse

Another major area of activity for the firm is financial services, which accounts for around one-fifth of its client work. Areas served include asset management, business process outsourcing/data providers, commercial finance, credit cards and payments, insurance, retail and wholesale banking, specialty financial products, stock and commodities exchanges, and wealth management and securities. Most notable is Bain's private equity practice (an advisory area the firm claims to have originated). Many times larger than its next-closest competitor, it serves equity markets in the U.S., Europe and Asia, and has been involved in more than 2,500 deal evaluations and 500 portfolio company projects since 1997. Its dominance is so complete that, in the past five years, the firm has taken part in half of all global deals that topped \$200 million. Services address due diligence, IPO preparation, portfolio profit improvement and exit planning, among other needs.

The original incarnation of Bain's private equity practice experienced a divergent evolution in 1984, when several partners split off to create Bain Capital. Today, Bain Capital is known both for managing more than \$78 billion in assets and for its co-founding by 2008 presidential candidate Mitt Romney. It stands as an entirely separate entity from Bain.

Madam chairperson

The company is led by Partner and Chairman Orit Gadiesh, a Harvard MBA who has taught business at The Hebrew University and the Jerusalem Institute of Management, and who once served in the Israeli Army. Gadiesh holds seats on the boards of the Publications Review Board of the Harvard Business School Press, as well as the Harvard College Overseers' Committee to Visit the Graduate School of Business Administration. These seats reflect her intellectual approach to business, which is also on display in her writing for management and business journals like the *Harvard Business Review* and *The Wall Street Journal*. In November 2007, Gadiesh was given a Lifetime Achievement Award from *Consulting* magazine and was honored at the publication's awards dinner for female leaders.

Latest stop, Dubai

In April 2008, Bain opened a new facility in Dubai, bringing its grand total number of offices to 38. The location will serve as the nerve center for operations in the Middle East, a region where client growth has been accelerating, drawing in not only private equity funds and subsidiaries of multinational organizations, but also local companies. Partner Jean-Marie Péan will head up the Dubai office, building on his successful track record of new locations in Brussels (1990) and Paris (2001). Earlier in 2008, Bain opened an office in Copenhagen, following up on 2007's new offices in Kiev, Moscow, Helsinki and Frankfurt, all significantly strengthening its European footprint. The Helsinki office, in particular, represents the company's first brick-and-mortar presence in Finland, where it had done business for years even in the absence of a physical location.

On the page

Bain's staff frequently publish studies and articles in industry publications, and are just as often quoted in the media. Some even write full-length books. Chris Zook, a partner in the strategy practice, has put out three books from the Harvard Business School Press: 2001's *Profit from the Core: Growth Strategy in an Era of Turbulence*, in which he suggests that the conventional wisdom is correct in that building market power behind a firmly defined business model is the best route to success; its 2004 follow-up, *Beyond the Core: Expand Your Market Without Abandoning Your Roots*, in which he explores the best use of expansion opportunities without losing touch of the original nature of your business; and 2007's *Unstoppable: Finding Hidden Assets to Renew the Core and Fuel Profitable Growth*, another core-concerned tome in which Zook breaks down interviews with major executives to reveal that crises can be averted or reversed by seeking out existing, underutilized assets. Most recently, in early 2008, Directors Mark Gottfredson and Steve Schaubert penned *The Breakthrough Imperative*, a look at the methods of today's most successful business managers and executives.

And on the tube

2008 saw Bain consultants also featured on television. Hugh MacArthur, global head of the private equity practice, was a guest on CNBC's *Squawk on the Street* in March, and spoke about the methods used to insulate private equity from the effects of recession. One month earlier, Chairman Gadiesh was interviewed on *Closing Bell* about her book (co-written with MacArthur) *Lessons from Private Equity Any Company Can Use (Memo to the CEO)*. Gadiesh also discussed how corporations are weathering the fallout from the subprime mortgage market.

Collecting accolades

In addition, Bain keeps popping up on industry best-of lists. In 2007, *Fortune* named the firm to its annual rundown of the 100 Best Companies to Work For. *BusinessWeek*, in 2006, honored the company as one of the 50 Best Places to Launch a Career.

The most enthusiastic recognition, however, has come from *Consulting* magazine, which has bestowed on Bain the unequivocal title of Best Firm to Work For every year from 2003 to 2007.

Corporate citizenship

Bain makes continual efforts to give back to the community through charity work and other philanthropic initiatives. It has provided pro bono consulting to over 100 nonprofit entities and efforts, including arts and tourism organizations, such as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago; youth and social service agencies, such as Boston's City Year program, the UCLA Johnson Cancer Center Foundation and America's Promise; and local drives by municipalities, like San Francisco's programs for the homeless.

Additionally, in January 2000, Bain collaborated with several U.S. foundations to create the Bridgespan Group, an independent nonprofit organization that offers management strategies, tools and personnel to assist other nonprofits and social responsibility-minded organizations. The Bridgespan Group, which maintains offices in Boston and San Francisco, takes volunteer consultants from Bain in six-month rotations. The firm encourages the rotation, noting that it gives Bridgespan clients a fresh perspective, while providing Bain consultants with valuable experience in the nonprofit sector. Past clients include Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, The Sierra Health Foundation and many others.

GETTING HIRED

Top recruiting

When it comes to campus recruiting, Bain sets its sights on the most prestigious names in education. Harvard, Kellogg, Chicago, Wharton, Stanford, Michigan and MIT are among its frequent feeders, and sources say the firm likes to look at "top-tier—Ivy League and equivalent—schools for undergrad and top-10 business schools." That's true "for all offices," insiders say, but Bain locations across the country will also visit "good schools that are close to each office." Hopefuls who hail from nontarget schools are not out of luck, however, as candidates from "any school can submit online."

Those selected for interviews will go through "two rounds, each with case interviews with different interviewers," but there are "no crazy tests like some of our competitors." "You can expect a market-sizing question," advises an insider, "but definitely do not expect any brainteasers." Employees describe the process as "straightforward." "Unlike some of the other firms I interviewed with, the people are not adversarial," explains a source. "They genuinely want to see you succeed." Another comments, "The goal is for everyone to leave their interview having had a good experience with Bain, even if they don't get a job offer."

Back that answer up

Campus candidates will typically begin with "two first-round interviews on campus," followed by two or three second-round interviews in the office. Sources say the pattern is generally "two case interviews in the first round, three case interviews in the second round and one experience interview." While the cases are the focus of most of the questioning, there will be "a few behavioral questions thrown in," as well as "miscellaneous questions about your resume and your background." Of course, these are only general guidelines, as the interview process varies office by office.

Bain interviewers keep things "friendly," insiders say, while asking questions like the following: "Should a niche sleeping bag maker go large-scale?" "Should an oil company drill in the Gulf of Mexico or the Middle East?" "How should we market a new mattress?" "A private equity client has hired Bain to help advise on an investment in laser vision centers. Should the private equity firm go forward with the deal?" "You inherit an apple orchard 50 miles outside of Boston from your grandmother. Should you run it as an orchard or do something else with it?" "Should a top-five home builder purchase its rival?" Market-sizing questions in Mexico are not uncommon, either. One staffer was asked, "How many Christmas trees were sold in Mexico last

year?” and another needed to “calculate the Mexican market size, in units, of Christmas tree ornaments.” Frequently, interviewers will ask candidates to walk them through their logic in answering these questions.

The full picture

Ex-interns rave about their experience at Bain. “It was fantastic. It had great work/life balance, great people, great casework,” says a current full-timer. Employees say the internship’s popularity comes from the fact that summer associates “are expected to perform at the same level as first-year consultants; their roles and responsibilities will be exactly the same.” What’s more, “Bain invests significantly in the summer experience, so summer associates get to know the people in the office and the unique culture that is Bain.”

A former intern speaks for many when he says, “My supervisors went out of their way to give me a work stream with real meat on it.” Another boasts, “I worked on a case for a Fortune 1000 company, where my work ended up as a significant portion of the final presentation to the client and had a major impact on its business going forward.” Despite the “robust work assignments in various industries,” interns say the workload is “manageable to complete in the 10 weeks.” There’s also a “fun side” to the experience, featuring “lake days, baseball games, training and networking events.” “The social aspect of the program was significant,” a source agrees. “We biked throughout the city, had a competitive cook-off against our mentors, played sand volleyball, hit a few baseball games and so much more. Many of my fellow interns are still some of my best friends.” The internship “confirmed all the good things I wanted to believe about Bain from the recruiting process,” a consultant remarks, so it’s no wonder that “most of our interns who receive offers accept on the spot.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

The lay of the land

“Given our emphasis on regional staffing,” Bain offices reflect the firm’s culture, which sources describe as “young, fun, outgoing and friendly,” as well as “open and direct.” “Case team rooms are an intense, high-energy and oftentimes extremely funny place to work,” and “people get right to the point and focus on resolving issues and affecting change—politics are not tolerated.” While Bainies (yes, that’s what they’re called) say they’re “less intellectual than consultants at most competing firms,” they’re “no less smart.” In fact, “It’s a place where people are really smart and successful, but not stuffy, elitist or formal.” One consultant likes to call Bain “the Apple of consulting firms.”

Strong points for most include knowing that “people value hard work, but also give you the option to take unpaid leave or extra vacation while actually supporting your career.” The fact that “great client opportunities” are available without five-day-a-week travel is a perk, too. And thanks to Bain’s “very tight network of sister companies and organizations, such as Bain Capital and Bridgespan,” consultants can “very easily move between these without ever really having to leave the Bain network.”

If there’s a downside to life at Bain, it’s the tightness of that network: Respondents say that “sometimes the expectations to integrate social activities into your work calendar can be a little much, particularly if you’re crunched and want to find time to spend with family and friends outside of Bain.” “Many people want to spend a lot more time together outside of the office than I do, which can be difficult,” a manager admits. But while “it can sometimes come across as a bit fratty to outsiders,” sources hasten to add that “the degree to which you make Bain your social life doesn’t impact your work performance at all.”

Balancing act

To combat on-the-job stress, “Bain takes burnout very seriously,” typically following up lengthy assignments with “some downtime for people to recover.” “Weekends are kept fairly sacred,” and “important meetings are typically scheduled far enough in advance to provide visibility and predictability into the workflow, so we can be mindful of weeks that may be more intense.”

“As long as I communicate that I have a commitment, in my case a sports team twice per week, my managers will do all they can to make sure I am able to make that commitment,” says a source. She adds, “I really value that part of the Bain culture and attitude.” “I have two kids and am at home more evenings than any person I know at other consulting firms,” a colleague agrees. “While we work hard at Bain, we leverage technology to free us from staying at the office and the client all day and night.” And the friendliness of the culture helps in this regard, as well. “At least when you have to work late, your manager feels bad,” a senior associate consultant remarks.

A little less face time and travel

Average workweeks range “anywhere from 40 to 70 hours, depending on the assignment and the intensity of the moment.” “There is a general level of flexibility around working hours, and many people prefer to leave early in the evenings and then work from home,” an insider explains. Assignment duration can vary significantly between practices; respondents estimate that projects in the general practice “generally last from two to six months, while private equity cases last from two to four weeks, on average.”

As for downtime, “When you’re between client cases, you may not have to come into the office every day, which is great for catching up on life things.” An associate consultant adds, “Unstaffed consultants are sometimes called on to step in on short projects or assist on teams, but generally they have enormous flexibility in how they spend their time.” Staffed or not, demands for “face time [are] pretty unusual”—managers are simply looking for “high-quality work done on time.”

Bain gets strong marks for its travel policy, in which “our default location is the home office, not the client.” “People travel when there is a need to meet clients, have interviews, collect data, etc.,” but Bainies “don’t set up shop for four or five days per week on every engagement.” Even those who do travel regularly enjoy “a high degree of local cases,” with a typical travel schedule of “Tuesday through Thursday.”

Time to the top

At Bain, we’re told, there’s “no up-or-out policy,” but sources say “the message is pretty clear when you miss a promotion cycle more than once.” The “set time frame” for promotions “can be a little frustrating for top performers.” An associate consultant explains, “Although Bain does give some staffing preference to high-performing staff, there is not really an accelerated promotion track, and some of the best associate consultants feel stifled by the lack of stretch opportunities and differentiation in compensation.” Others like the fact that the “strict” time line—“two years from associate consultant to senior associate consultant, one-and-a-half more to consultant or an MBA”—“reduces stress and competition,” and one staffer notes that “the time line to manager has become more variable.”

Strict or not, Bain’s process gets points for transparency. “The feedback and professional development mechanisms are fantastic,” a consultant opines. “I have never been surprised by the result of a review or promotion decision.”

Goal!

Most Bainies are happy with their compensation, rating it above-average for the consulting industry. They also appreciate their monetary perks, which include “an automatic 401(k) contribution, 4.5 to 7 percent of gross salary depending on tenure,” occasional “co-investment opportunities with Bain private equity clients” and “profit sharing based on North American utilization levels from the senior associate consultant level and above.”

Other benefits include “medical and dental coverage, home Internet, cell phone and BlackBerry service coverage,” plus “free coffee and food, and money toward the gym,” and “\$1,000 toward business school prep.” A source notes, “There are also lots of social events and lunches both in and out of the office.” One consultant calls the annual Bain off-site retreat the firm’s “best perk,” saying, “The best part is that spouses and significant others are included.” Some offices maintain “ski and beach houses,” and the annual Bain World Cup is a highly anticipated event in which hundreds of soccer-obsessed Bainies from around the world gather “in Europe for a long weekend over Labor Day, on the company’s tab” to compete against each other.

Parents praise Bain's family-friendly policies, noting that the firm offers "three months' paid leave and three months' unpaid with job protection" for new mothers, plus "part-time options available upon return."

Mostly mentors

At Bain, as elsewhere, the manager-subordinate relationship "varies from case to case." Most respondents praise their bosses for a "focus on the professional development of consulting staff," and say "people here check their ego at the door," perhaps because "Bain rates managers on how well they develop members of their teams." A consultant comments, "I have learned a ton from my supervisors. For the most part, senior people at Bain take mentoring and coaching very seriously." The source adds that this process is especially effective "if you have a coachable attitude."

In addition, the firm's relatively flat structure means junior consultants can be "afforded very frank discussions with firm leadership and C-level executives within the client's firm," an insider states. "Bain's great about enabling more junior members to interact with very senior client management teams," a colleague agrees. A senior associate consultant recalls, "During my second year, I was able to present to the client's CEO and CFO—pretty awesome!"

Around the world

New hires begin with "an intense, 10-day training program that brings together new associate consultants from all over the world." Later on, "there is a strong balance of official training, both worldwide training programs and office-specific programs," and sources appreciate "bonding with Bainies worldwide" at global training events. These formal sessions "usually cover hard skills, such as Excel, PowerPoint and financial concepts." The programs are unique to Bain, too, in that "the official training is all internal," a staffer points out. "The trainers are the best managers and partners in the company. None of it is outsourced, so you learn from the people who have been successful here."

In addition to formal training, "there is a significant amount of apprenticeship training and coaching that happens on the job," which results in "great professional development." Says a consultant, "The entire job is an apprenticeship, so every day you are learning informally from supervisors, peers and even subordinates."

C'mon in

Though Bain offices "are not lavish," they are improving; insiders say "the firm made big investments in the last few years to upgrade office spaces in many major cities." Sure, "they might not be as formal and furnished as some competitors," but "they're extremely functional and comfortable." Most facilities are designed to offer "lots of open space for interactions with colleagues." That means "cubicles have low walls so you can see everyone," and "offices and doors are glass."

To blow off steam, Boston Bainies relax with "lots of mini-hoops, air hockey and TVs." San Francisco boasts "a wonderful view" and "an awesome espresso machine," while in Chicago, staffers are proud to be "LEED certified"—that means "we have everything from a solid desk-side recycling program to recycled carpet and furniture, bike racks, a locker room with showers, tons of natural lighting and a green team committed to taking it all to the next level."

Beyond the office

Community work is "a big deal" at Bain, where each office undertakes "pro bono consulting for local schools and charities, an annual donation drive for the United Way and a variety of grassroots efforts driven by the consulting staff." There's also an annual officewide community impact day, where "everyone goes to a charity to volunteer for the day." Associate consultants "run a program called Inspire, which provides consulting services to local nonprofits and has been wildly successful." Bainies "also have the opportunity to do an externship with Bridgespan, a company Bain started to consult to nonprofits."

Pro-diversity

Respondents say “it seems as though we’re doing well” on GLBT diversity; there’s “a special group, firmwide, called BGLAD that serves as a peer group for GLBT employees.” “I know a number of openly gay consultants,” a source reports, and a gay employee offers this perspective: “The firm is so good on gay issues that I have trouble getting motivated to participate in our gay and lesbian alliance. In some ways, it’s like, ‘what’s the point?’”

Likewise, Bain is “extremely receptive to women,” and has begun “extensive undergraduate and MBA outreach to build the best candidate pool.” Once onboard, women find “organized events to discuss gender issues, such as at certain clients where men make up almost all of the executive team.” While there are “admittedly fewer women at the partner level,” sources say hiring efforts will pay off down the road “to increase the presence at that level as well.”

Where insiders say the firm needs to focus most is on “increased diversity” of ethnic minorities. Acknowledging that it’s “still a problem,” one consultant notes that there are “only two black partners firmwide.” Others clarify that Bain “is very receptive” to people of all backgrounds, but say “targeted outreach and support programs” would help with recruiting a more varied mix. The company points out, additionally, that it recently hired and tasked a senior manager with improving diversity recruiting and retention. It also started the Latinos@Bain network, a group that aims to cultivate Latino business talent.

Booz & Company

101 Park Avenue, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10178
Phone: (212) 697-1900
Fax: (212) 551-6732
www.booz.com

LOCATIONS

57 offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Finance
Information Technology
Mergers & Restructuring
Operations & Logistics
Organization & Change
Product & Service Innovation
Sales & Marketing
Strategy & Leadership

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Chairman: Joe Saddi

CEO: Shumeet Banerji

2008 Employees: 3,300

FY 2008 Sales: \$4.8 billion (includes former combined operations with Booz Allen Hamilton)

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

- #2 – Energy Consulting
- #5 – Operational Consulting
- #8 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting
- #9 – Financial Consulting
- #10 – Economic Consulting
- #10 (Tie) – Human Resources Consulting

Quality of Life

- #13 – Interaction with Clients

UPPERS

- “No politics or drama that you see in other corporations”
- “The variety of assignments and industries”
- The ability to work internationally
- Strong commitment to corporate social responsibility

DOWNERS

- “Pace and intensity of work makes focusing on personal goals a little difficult”
- Limited official training opportunities
- “Sink-or-swim culture”
- “Takes too long to get to partner”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.booz.com/global/home/join_us



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Top-class firm, recent turmoil will pass”
- “Buttoned up, stiff”
- “Very high-level insights”
- “Internal governance problems”

THE SCOOP

Booz clues

Booz & Company, a global consultancy that advises government and commercial clients on issues of strategy, organization, operations, transformation and information technology, is the former global commercial business of industry stalwart Booz Allen Hamilton. It holds expertise in a vast range of industries, including aerospace, automotive, chemicals, financial services, health, insurance, media, oil and gas, transportation and others. Booz also works with organizations in the public sector, particularly government agencies outside the U.S.

The company, founded in 1914 by Edwin Booz, is one of the oldest consulting firms in the world. In its original incarnation, as The Business Research Service, lone staffer Booz conducted studies and investigational services. The name Edwin G. Booz Surveys was adopted in 1924. Despite carrying a title befitting his one-man operation, Booz brought in two new employees (George Fry and James Allen) during the 1920s, and the firm's work began to draw attention from large clients like Goodyear, the *Chicago Tribune*, Montgomery Ward and the Canadian & Pacific Railroad.

From here to everywhere

The company carried out all business domestically until 1953, when the Philippine government hired it to clean up and assess its archipelagic nation's land ownership records. In 1957, to capitalize on growing international opportunities, Booz opened its first foreign office in Zurich, giving it a Western European base. Expansion continued steadily in Western and Central Europe throughout the next several decades, capped by a period of peak investment and energy in the mid-1980s, when the firm aggressively courted clients in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In the 1990s, the focus turned to Asia. New offices were opened in Bangkok, Mumbai, Seoul and Shanghai, as well as in Abu Dhabi. This burst of expansion did not preclude growth on other continents, however, as during the decade locations were also opened in South America (Bogota), Africa (Pretoria) and Europe (Frankfurt).

Not all growth has been organic. In 1999, the firm solidified its presence in the Nordic region with the acquisition of Carta Corporate Advisors AB, a major consultancy with activities in Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark. Then, in 2003, the acquisition of Gemini Consulting Japan doubled the size and capabilities of the firm's operations in Tokyo.

Down the middle

In May 2008, Booz Allen Hamilton announced it would split its U.S. government business from the global commercial consulting business. In conjunction with the split, the firm sold a majority stake in the U.S. government business to The Carlyle Group for \$2.54 billion. The commercial business became Booz & Company, a separate entity owned and run by its existing officers. The U.S. government business continues under the Booz Allen Hamilton name, in partnership with Carlyle. The new Booz & Company will operate as a subsidiary of Booz Allen Hamilton until the realignment is finalized. Closing of the transaction is planned for mid- to late 2008, though it remains contingent upon shareholder and regulatory approvals, as well as certain other conditions. The company's board of directors has recommended the realignment unanimously. Booz Allen Hamilton Chief Executive Ralph Shrader will continue to lead the U.S. government business, and Shumeet Banerji will serve as CEO of the commercial business.

Some of the motivating factors behind this realignment are evident in the hard statistics of the business. As a combined entity, the company generated over \$4 billion in annual sales, with approximately one-third coming from the commercial side, even though two-thirds of the firm's partners worked on that side. The government practice, making up the lion's share of sales, had only one-third of the leadership and, with 18,000 staff, a less favorable partner/consultant ratio than the commercial group, with about 3,300 staff. These differences ultimately led to distinct consulting models between the two units, a schism that, among other factors, logically led to the formal separation.

Smooth operations

One of Booz & Company's major practice areas is operations. A client's operations, as the company defines the term, cover such functions as product and process development, manufacturing, sourcing, distribution and back-office concerns. In servicing these functions, Booz may provide acquisition due diligence, postmerger integration, overall diagnostics, implementation support and continuous improvement or other performance strategies. The firm applies cross-industry knowledge to these engagements, making sure to evaluate all decisions, whether strategic or tactical, for potential impact on the bottom line.

For a change

Related to the operations unit is Booz's organization and change practice. One of the concepts it uses to categorize and prepare a client for changes and performance improvements is "organizational DNA." Gauged by Booz's own online tool, the Org DNA Profiler, organizational DNA presents a map of an organization's ability to perform based on four components: decision making, flow of information, motivation and internal structure. The firm analyzes a client's profile to design a suitable program of change. Major clients that have come to the firm for organization change include the U.K. Department for Work and Pensions, Australia's Department of Human Services and the Linde Group. In a recent engagement with an agricultural commodity producer, Booz drew up plans for a decentralized operating structure that repurposed individual farms as profit-accountable business units, while also working to improve the company's processing and research capabilities. Share prices rose 48 percent following the project.

For change within the core management or governance of an institution, Booz turns to its global joint venture with Panthea, a consulting firm with offices in New York, Boston and London, specializing in leadership alignment and effectiveness. Panthea assists with strategy, executive search, psychology, leadership and organizational development.

Booz's big wheel

The firm is led by CEO Shumeet Banerji, a 16-year Booz veteran who, prior to the split, served as managing director of the European business. Banerji has performed engagements in both the public and private sectors in the U.S., Asia and Europe. Most recently, he has advised government ministries and financial service institutions on the effect of changing demographics on long-term savings and retirement provisions. Before joining the firm, Banerji was on the faculty at the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business. He holds a PhD from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University.

Booz on the shelf

The firm's staff, when not on assignment, stay busy writing books, papers and studies. Senior Partner Gary Nielson collaborated on an article for the June 2008 issue of *Harvard Business Review* called "The Secrets to Successful Strategy Execution." The piece discusses a common strategic mistake of organizations—skipping decision rights and information flow, and jumping straight to structural reorganization. Earlier in 2008, Partner Christopher Vollmer published the book *Always On: Advertising, Marketing, and Media in an Era of Consumer Control*, in which he argues that the world is entering a consumer-centric digital age, where conventional methods of marketing will have little success. Also released in 2008 was *Make or Break: How Manufacturers Can Leap from Decline to Revitalization*, a collaborative work by two partners, Kaj Grichnik and Conrad Winkler. The book investigates the new business environment for manufacturers, offering insights into the ways modernized processes can provide significant strategic advantages.

A recent study produced by Booz consultants is March 2008's "The Bounty of Biofuels—Perception Versus Reality," by Senior Partners Bill Jackson and Eric Spiegel, Partner Leslie Moeller and Senior Associate Praneet Gupta. In the piece, the authors attempt to clear up misperceptions regarding biofuels, while also discussing likely outcomes. Booz also publishes a quarterly magazine called *strategy + business*, which the firm claims "bridges the gap between theory and practice in contemporary global business." The publication features contributors with a range of backgrounds, including journalists, academics, consultants and corporate strategists.

Highly decorated

Though Booz & Company is off on its own for the first time, it's hardly a babe in the woods. Under its former combined structure, the firm was frequently recognized by the media as a top work environment. In 2007, it appeared on *Fortune*'s list of the 100 Best Companies to Work for and on *BusinessWeek*'s list of the Best Places to Launch a Career. It was also chosen by *Working Mother* magazine in 2007 as one of the Top 10 Best Companies for Working Mothers, marking the third time it has achieved this status, and the ninth consecutive time it has been named to the magazine's top 100. The firm was cited for its hospitable work policies, such as child care programs and availability of paid leave.

GETTING HIRED

The "taxi test"

Qualified candidates for entry-level positions at Booz can expect "two rounds of two to three 45-minute interviews," while industry hires may encounter "up to 10 interviews." A principal reports that "most often, interviews are a mix of fit discussions about objectives, goals and interests, as well as capability via a short case discussion." We're told that interviewers are "looking for a structured thought process," while also considering "the taxi-test—that is, would we want to sit next to you in a taxi late at night in some foreign country?" Insiders note that case questions may be along the lines of: "Bank X is an investment bank in the U.K. and has recently bought a small private bank Y in Switzerland. Profits of each bank were X and Y, respectively. Combined profits of the new bank are Z, where Z is less than (X plus Y). Why have profits fallen?" or "Bank A has just hired a new CIO with no IT experience or background. He has called you in to advise him of his top issues for concern. What are they?" Some staffers mention that candidates may also need to take a "math and logic test."

To lighten the mood, staffers report, there is a "series of meet-and-greet sessions to attend, if you would like." Booz recruits at the "top-20 MBA programs and undergraduate schools," including Harvard Business School, Wharton, UCLA and Stanford.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Driven, for better or worse

Insiders say that the focus at Booz is definitely on "high-quality work," which makes for a "challenging, analytical, performance-driven, very intense and client-centric" environment. The firm is "full of young, dynamic, go-getter-type people," whom colleagues describe as independent, thoughtful and energetic. Many staffers say their co-workers are also "affable," and that the Booz culture is "team-oriented, with strong collaboration among colleagues." A senior consultant says his fellow consultants "have an inherent desire to help and develop others professionally," while another adds, "These are people that you'd want to spend time with—a nerd-free zone, which is what really differentiated it for me when deciding between the top firms." A partner notes that there is "a little bit of an underdog mentality," which, he says, "makes us work harder but more together." Others agree that the firm is "very collegial" with "lots of support and guidance," as well as "lots of sharing," making it a "pleasant place to work."

That being said, not everyone thinks the "results-driven, no-nonsense" environment is a good thing. Some say the atmosphere is too "competitive, individualistic and political" for their liking. A New York-based associate has been disappointed to find his colleagues "socially polite but not friendly." And a longtimer thinks the "culture tends to play on insecurities, as this encourages performance." A senior consultant agrees that the firm is "very sink-or-swim," and warns, "If you are a star performer, you can do whatever you want. If you are not, you can get lost in the shuffle."

Change is for the best

Insiders do agree, however, that Booz's recent split from U.S.-government focused Booz Allen Hamilton has been nothing but a positive. At worst, we're told the change has had "minimal tangible effects" on daily work and life. Insiders insist that "the transition has been flawless" and "the rollout was exceptionally well done." A senior associate adds, "The partnership did a great job of managing the communications to the rest of the company, and reassuring people that this won't impact their career or opportunities." In all, he concludes, "from a change management perspective, they hit a home run. They took from their toolkit of what we tell clients to do, and just executed it perfectly internally."

Others note that the change was more than welcome, and that the "fresh perspective that comes with a new company is very exciting." One experienced staffer shares, "I felt a very tangible sense of excitement, even outright joy, at the culmination of the split from the U.S. government practice." He explains, "While we enjoyed our relationship with our government colleagues, I think it became very, very clear that we were very different companies with nonaligned objectives in terms of the types of work that we do. No one—and I mean no one—on the strategy side of the business was particularly concerned with losing this relationship." Colleagues add that, among higher-ups especially, the split created "a sense of truly stepping up, of owning the business, and a sense that we have control over our own destiny—and people are genuinely excited by that." A principal remarks, "Now, we actually have the authority to make decisions about investments, and decisions about people and promotions and what the partnership looks like that we didn't have before."

The luck of the draw

Meanwhile, among more junior consultants, we're told the split has resulted in "more involvement from the partners and senior staff in terms of understanding what the junior staff wants." An associate reports, "We are now looking into more robust training programs, mentorship programs and ways for junior members such as myself to participate in cross-country staffing. This is surely an exciting time!" It helps that many respondents consider their supervisors to be top notch. One recent hire in Los Angeles says that he's had "great mentors" who are "always ready and willing to answer questions and explain things they have probably explained to first-years a million times with patience and clarity." And another newbie is happy to have plenty of exposure to higher-ups, reporting, "In my first week at Booz, I was already sitting in a board room with senior management of a company—what a great opportunity."

Not everyone is so satisfied. A disappointed associate states, "People at the senior associate/job manager role are so stressed by the system (chronic overselling) that interactions are typically strained." And a senior consultant remarks, "I would prefer it if the partners spent more time with us." But at a large firm, perhaps it's too much to hope that everyone would be content. A longtimer explains, "The standard deviation is high. I have a very close relationship with some partners and rarely talk to others." Another notes, "Interactions with top-level senior management is better as a job manager than when you are a starting associate," adding, "The position on the team determines the degree of interaction with clients." Still, seniority doesn't always help. "Sometimes," we're told by a senior consultant, "even a fresh associate can have good interactions when working on a small project, while on the other hand, an experienced associate on a big project may not." And even a principal with nearly a decade at the firm remarks, "Partners tend to monopolize senior client time and not let principals participate in those discussions."

Mixed reviews on training

It would perhaps help level the playing field if a more formal training structure were in place, but we're told that "most training is unofficial." Senior staffers insist that, "as with any consulting firm, you learn mostly by doing and coaching," and claim that "this is an apprenticeship-based business." Though as one senior consultant remarks, "The apprenticeship model is what is most effective, but it relies on good job managers that care about their staff on the job. Usually you'll get this, but sometimes you won't." That being said, the split from Booz Allen Hamilton has brought with it a renewed focus on accountability, which may increase mentorship success. A principal in New York states, "For the first time, we have scorecards," explaining, "As a principal, they're looking at my bookings, my billability and my mentees' billability, and that's something we've never had before. We get these once a month. The scorecards show you where you are relative to targets." She continues, "We're also

getting reports on our mentees' billability, so there can be no excuse for not keeping up with mentees. This signals the accountability that we're being held to, and a greater focus on how we're developing people up and down the food chain."

When it comes to more official training options, an associate says he expects "maybe one official one- to two-day course every 18 months." These sessions come in two types: "level-based (a course aimed at new promotes at every level) and skill-building (craft skills, e.g., writing, speaking etc.)." Opinions on these courses vary widely. One principal complains, "I have been in consulting for eight years now and have not seen a firm so not into training, which quite frankly is totally unacceptable for a strategy firm." And another quips, "Training? You need to be billable!" That said, others claim that the courses that do exist are, in a word, "excellent."

The learning curve

One way or the other, it's wise to learn quickly, since most insiders say the firm has a "strictly up-or-out" promotion policy. An associate explains that the "promotion schedule is very rigid," with roughly a two-and-a-half-year period from associate to senior associate, then three years to principal and four more to partner. Some say "there are exceptions made," like "alternative career tracks for people with deep functional expertise," but those are rare. Generally, a senior consultant reports, "If a consultant does not perform well in one year, he will be put in probation for six months, after which he will be evaluated again. If he does not demonstrate clear development, he will be dismissed."

That being said, we're also told the "evaluation process is very comprehensive." A senior consultant opines, "Although it takes a lot of time, it really evaluates one's performance, and supports the establishment of development needs going forward." Plus, insiders say the recent split from the government business now means that "it's just commercial folks evaluating commercial folks," potentially making for a "faster path to partner." Others agree that with the change has come "some discussion about getting people to partner faster." "We're still a year away from this," notes a principal, "but there is certainly potential." For example, reports a senior associate, "This year, we have more principals going into their second year than we have in the last five to six years."

Travel is no surprise

When it comes to the daily grind, workloads tend to fall somewhere between 60 and 70 hours per week, although, says a principal, "on certain tricky assignments" they can start climbing to "80-plus." Agrees a senior consultant, "Tough projects, tough job managers or not being able to manage working hours can take it up to 80, but these are pretty rare."

Others remind us that weekly hour counts depend "on whether you include travel time in the calculation," which can add "five to six" hours to the total. Then again, as one partner notes, travel time is not necessarily taxing—on the plane he usually makes a point of "reading a magazine and drinking wine!"

Regardless of how the travel time is spent, "heavy travel" is a fact of life at Booz. As one LA-based staffer puts it, "Our job is to help senior executives with their most difficult problems ... We can't do that sitting in the office." And a principal comments, "I believe we are slightly higher than average (versus other consulting firms) on travel—in part because of how we work with our clients and how often they request our presence." That being said, a staffer insists that there are no surprises. "The expectation when I took this job was 80 percent travel," she reports. "It has not been any more than that. So it is in line with what was communicated up front."

A focus on 5-4-3-2-1

And indeed, we're told the firm implements what it calls a "5-4-3-2-1 policy." A senior partner explains that this means "working on five days (not weekends), four nights staying at home (which usually means Monday through Thursday on the road and Friday in the office, at a minimum), three nights max away from home, at least two projects during the year and no more than one project at a time."

The policy seems to appease most staffers. Plus, one happy road warrior notes, “The firm accommodates people’s travel preferences—to a certain degree. I’ve sought out travel as much as possible, and it’s been good; in three years, I’ve spent over 12 months overseas and had only one job in my home city.” Another agrees, “The company has been very flexible and has brought me home for extended periods when I have asked them to.” Accommodations aren’t guaranteed, however: “Not everyone is so lucky; some get more travel than they want, some get less.” And travel schedules may vary by location. For example, a senior associate shares, “I previously worked in the Chicago office where there are fewer local clients and more airport delays. From New York, I have found travel to be very manageable.”

Balance is easier for some than others

When it comes to achieving a comfortable work/life balance, the long hours and travel time often take their toll. “Expect to cancel plans regularly,” warns a New York-based associate. A colleague says that although he tries to put his family first, “the tensions are palpable and one constantly wonders what indirect damage is done to a career by clearly asserting family as the top priority.” And a senior consultant moans, “My work is 100 percent travel. I no longer have a life back in my home city and I also gave up my apartment.”

But that’s not to say balance is an impossibility. Some insiders claim “achieving a good balance depends a lot on the nature of the project/client one is working on, and is not consistent across the firm.” “I have been on projects that give me an excellent balance and others that give me a poor one,” an associate agrees.

Flexibility takes the cake

Still others say that regardless of the project they are working on, they are able to make their schedules work. A senior consultant who works 70-hour weeks explains that “although the workload is very intense, it is also usually very flexible.” Others report that there is “no concept of face time,” and “no one looks over your shoulder.” In fact, a partner insists that Booz offers “fantastic flexibility in working arrangements,” citing “location, part-time status and nonclient-facing roles for those who need them for short periods of time (three to six months), as well as sabbaticals.” Plus, another staffer adds, “I have never had problems taking my scheduled vacations, and we get substantial time off (which gives time to recover from intense assignments).” A colleague concurs, “We work hard, but readily and frequently make time for personal commitments.” “I still play touch football, tennis and soccer each week,” echoes another.

Managing all the travel, a principal insists, just “requires one to know his priorities and boundaries. It also requires one to be focused—on work when traveling, on family/life when not—otherwise, one will struggle to find a balance.” He adds, “Most work/life balance issues of which I am aware (the truly serious ones that cause family issues, social issues, maybe even health issues) are caused less by the firm and more by individuals not being clear about their needs, or not being aware of their own boundaries (so they continually cross them without hesitation). It has much more to do with the individual than with the firm.” A senior consultant adds, “Since I have not had to work on weekends for a long time, the travel hasn’t had a great impact in my work/life balance.”

Super salaries, bumper bonuses

Most insiders are pleased with compensation levels at the firm. We’re told by some that “the base compensation is in line with other consulting firms and above several other industries,” and by others that “the compensation is higher than most consulting firms.” However, those same consultants also warn that “the bonus policy is very weak,” and the “bonus (variable) is below consulting average.” Still, we’re told the firm offers a “generous profit-based contribution to 401(k)” (although some say the “vesting period is too long”), “a deposit of 6 percent of our annual salary in a [retirement fund]” as well as a “stock plan for partners.” Plus, respondents say the firm’s split from Booz Allen Hamilton has brought about a buzz that there may yet be “several changes in compensation,” for the better. A source down South is hoping that the structural change will “perhaps bring about some recognition that we can afford to do more for our people.”

To date, among the firm's "many perks" are "parental leave savings accounts," "life insurance," "financial advisory assistance" and a "very strong health plan." Higher-ups can enjoy having the "initiation fee and annual fees" covered for country club memberships, while junior staffers can apply for "MBA sponsorship in top business schools" (no word on whether the admission process is easier at Northwestern, where "one of the main buildings is named after Jim Allen," a firm founder). There are also "activities throughout the year" for all, including "cultural events, wine tastings and trips."

Consultants are less enthralled with the state of their offices. A San Francisco-based principal is pleased with the "wonderful facilities" there, but warns of the "appalling disrepair of the New York office and cramped quarters in Chicago." A partner explains that some of the offices "are not so hot because we are in the midst of renovations and haven't gotten to all of them." He adds, though, that the ones that have been redone are "spectacular."

"The sky is the limit"

Also spectacular, we're told, is Booz's commitment to corporate philanthropy. Insiders say the firm is "very, very, very supportive of community involvement." In particular, the firm makes "contributions to selected charities," undertakes "selective/high-profile pro bono projects" each year and "helps place staff on nonprofit boards." Specifically, Booz has supported Harvest for Hunger, Rebuilding Together, British Red Cross, Special Olympics and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

A principal insists, "We encourage individuals to bring their ideas to the fore, and then put teams in place to support them in making something happen in their community," adding, "The most wonderful part of it is that it does not take a bunch of corporate approvals or some long, paper-laden process; rather, it is about individuals taking responsibility and making things happen, forming teams and taking on challenges." A senior vice president echoes, "Our rule is that in order to get funding, you need to be active in whatever organization you choose. But other than that, the sky is the limit." A senior consultant shares his positive experience: "I've been involved with one organization very closely through our community services committee. As a junior consultant, I was responsible for organizing biannual volunteering days for our offices, and encouraged getting them as a pro bono partner. We did a two-month pro bono piece of work. I have stayed involved with the organization (and with Booz's support), and they asked me to join their board. I can say that without the encouragement and support of my firm, it probably wouldn't have happened."

Devoted to diversity

Also a high priority at Booz is diversity. In fact, one senior partner remarks that it "is the only standing (nonfinancial) board of directors agenda item." A partner agrees that "commitment to diversity is core." And, notes another source, "There are only two firmwide awards, and one of them is for teams and individuals that promote diversity." We're also told "most offices put a huge emphasis on minority diversity," in part "through innovative recruiting and mentoring activities."

That being said, the numbers of both minorities and women "continue to be low in higher ranks." Retaining women in particular "continues to be a challenge," staffers say, largely due to "structural issues like travel and work/life balance." But in an effort to address those concerns, the firm "usually is very flexible with pregnant women and recent mothers." Working moms are generally able to settle on an arrangement that allows them more time at home. "I recently had my first child and found the firm to be extremely supportive both during my pregnancy and my leave," a senior associate attests, while a colleague adds, "I have four children between ages five and 10, plus a working husband. Most of my clients are within a one-hour flight."

Some say diversity efforts with respect to women are "office-specific" and that "some offices are very proactive about scheduling events and providing resources to women." For example, a senior associate in Cleveland shares, "We have implemented, in my local office, a women's leadership initiative designed to provide additional training, mentoring and support to develop the female consultants."

Monitor Group

Two Canal Park
Cambridge, MA 02141
Phone: (617) 252-2000
Fax: (617) 252-2100
www.monitor.com

LOCATIONS

Cambridge, MA (HQ)
30 offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Economic Development & Security
Innovation
Marketing & Pricing
Organization & Leadership
Strategy

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: Mark Fuller
2008 Employees: 1,600
2007 Employees: 1,400

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#9 – Economic Consulting

Quality of Life

#5 – Offices
#9 – Relationships with Supervisors
#10 – Firm Culture
#14 – Overall Satisfaction
#17 – Interaction with Clients
#18 – Best Firms to Work For
#18 – Travel Requirements
#19 – Hours in the Office
#20 – Work/Life Balance

Diversity

#15 – Diversity for GLBT
#19 – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- Freedom to individualize your career path
- "I have not stopped learning yet!"
- "Very senior client interactions early on in your career"
- "Entrepreneurial approach to developing and commercializing new ideas"

DOWNERS

- No 401(k) match program
- "Some elements of a family-run business that make us run a little 'clunkier' than other larger and older firms"
- "Staffing model can be a bit hectic"
- "It's sometimes hard to navigate the less structured career paths"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.monitor.com/Join



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Like Saabs or Volvos ... quirky but good"
- "Porter's coattails"
- "Smart and small, but powerful; great work/life balance"
- "Seen better days"

THE SCOOP

Switched on

Monitor Group is a professional services firm focused on strategy consulting, capability building and capital services. Its services include marketing and growth strategy, organizational analysis, corporate finance, leadership development, operational and corporate planning, and competitive analysis. Founded in Cambridge, Mass., in 1983 by professors from Harvard Business School, today Monitor has 30 offices across the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Clients come from nearly every industry, including automotive, health care, telecom, energy, consumer products, financial services, tourism, media and advertising, and computers, as well as the public sector. For the most part, the company works with Fortune 500 companies, but occasionally serves midtier organizations, government agencies and nonprofits, as well. Monitor prides itself on the long-lasting impact it has on clients. Work is done in a highly collaborative environment in which consultants and clients work side-by-side to solve problems. Moreover, Monitor places significant emphasis on achieving a knowledge transfer to its clients by “teaching them how to fish,” as some at the firm call it.

Breadth of activities

Monitor’s core competitive strategy capabilities are practiced throughout the organization. Meanwhile, there are several business units that focus on developing and applying cutting-edge thinking in key growth-related disciplines: Monitor Innovation, which helps companies develop comprehensive innovation strategies; Lattice Partners, which assists clients seeking to transform leaders, teams and organizations, and helps align organizational design and strategy; m2c, which develops marketing and pricing strategies for Monitor’s clients; and MAST, which focuses on strategic transactions and M&A.

In addition to these core growth disciplines, Monitor also operates several highly specialized business units that enhance its ability to advise clients. The Monitor Institute, for example, advises nonprofit, philanthropic and social-sector institutions, while Monitor Executive Development designs training and other talent cultivation programs for clients.

Since much of Monitor’s expertise is homegrown, it has also made a number of strategic acquisitions to enhance its capabilities in some sectors. For example, several years ago, Monitor acquired the Strategic Pricing Group (which, as the name indicates, is engaged in the field of pricing strategy), and more recently it picked up Doblin Inc. (a leader in innovation strategy).

Monitoring money

Monitor Capital is the firm’s merchant banking arm, along with Monitor Clipper Partners and Monitor Venture. Clipper Partners is a \$1.5 billion private equity investment firm that targets midmarket companies in North America and Europe. With the Monitor Group behind it, Clipper Partners can combine an infusion of capital resources with advisory and guidance. Some companies currently in its investment portfolio are Olive Group, a provider of security solutions; TPI, a business process outsourcing consulting firm; and Earth Fare, an operator of organic supermarkets. Monitor Ventures serves a similar function as Clipper Partners, though it looks primarily at early-stage companies, helping to commercialize new information, technology, bio and medical systems, and consumer products and services.

Lifting Libya

The company’s projects and international stature put it in contact with government and business leaders of many sorts, but some engagements may nevertheless surprise the average citizen. Michael Porter, a co-founder of Monitor who was once named the top business intellectual in the world by Accenture, was contacted in 2002 by the ruling family of Libya, the Qadaffis, for assistance in modernizing their country’s economy. Although exportation of petroleum gave Libya one of the highest GDPs in Africa at the time, its corporate infrastructure was limited and tourism was minimal. Porter himself did not become personally involved in the project for several years, but Monitor set about the task with its usual analytical rigor.

Following the mending of relations between the U.S. and Libya in 2006, there has been notable progress. The country has initiated a number of market reforms, applying for membership in the World Trade Organization and announcing plans for privatization of some industries. Production of iron, steel and aluminum has expanded from what were once miniscule non-oil sectors. In February 2007, Porter attended the ceremonial launch of the Libyan Economic Development Board, a body responsible for supporting the fledgling national business market by easing registration for small enterprises and providing professional training for local entrepreneurs. Monitor also proposed a plan for a three-month leadership program that will foster probusiness ideals.

Up on the shelf

Monitor's experts regularly produce books, articles, white papers and other works of business and consulting research or scholarship. Some major publications include Eamonn Kelly's *Powerful Times: Rising to the Challenge of Our Uncertain World*, published in March 2007—a look at the massive change in store for the world's population as a result of unprecedented influences on nations and their economies from terrorism, nuclear proliferation and other factors; 2005's *Best Face Forward: Why Companies Must Improve Their Service Interfaces With Customers*, by Jeffrey Rayport and Bernie Jaworski, which examines how humans and machines can best collaborate in mediating critical customer interactions; and, perhaps most famously, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, Porter's landmark 1998 publication on competitive strategy and industry analysis.

Monitocracy

Purely on a philosophical level, Monitor understands that career development is individualized, coming about from different choices and rates of advancement, rather than a set pace and promotion track to which employees must adhere. This means that Monitor has no formal “up-or-out” policy the way that many of its competitors do. Consultants at Monitor aren't tracked within “classes” of peers as they are at other consulting firms, thus leaving the possibility for much more rapid advancement compared to firms with a more conventional class- or cohort-based promotion system. In fact, there are Monitor consultants who are known to have made the transition from undergraduate consultant to the associate partner level (or candidate leader, as it is known) in just five years.

Conscientious corporation

Monitor shows a great deal of social awareness, and acknowledges its larger responsibilities as a prominent global institution through several initiatives. The firm is the signature partner to New Profit, Inc., a U.S.-based venture philanthropy fund that provides strategic counseling and financial support to social entrepreneurs. It is also a partner of Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT), a nonprofit that grooms African-American, Hispanic and Native American youth for leadership positions in companies, nonprofits and entrepreneurial ventures. Collaborating with New Profit, Monitor advised MLT on growth strategy, and has supplied consultants as faculty for the program's career prep classes. The firm also teams up with Teach for America (TFA), a domestic educational Peace Corps, of sorts, which places recent college grads in teaching positions in impoverished towns and cities across the U.S. As a partner of the organization, Monitor agrees to hold positions for recruits who accept a two-year term with TFA, while also giving those recruits career support and summer internships. Recruits are selected from existing TFA corps members, as well.

Monitor also recognizes and rewards social awareness in others. The firm collaborates with *Fast Company* magazine each year for the Social Capitalist Awards, which honor the accomplishments of institutions—both for-profit and nonprofit—in improving the world. The 2008 awards spotlighted 45 nonprofits and 10 for-profits, among them Echoing Green Foundation, an investor of seed capital in burgeoning social projects, PATH, a group working to reform health practices in developing countries, and Teach for America.

GETTING HIRED

Pen and paper required

When it comes to hiring, insiders report that Monitor “follows a different process than most peer consulting firms,” since applicants participate in individual and group written case interviews over two rounds. “We do not use brainteasers in our interviews,” insists one staffer. After a “resume, cover letter and transcript submission,” qualified candidates will participate in a “first-round interview, which consists of a case interview and a fit (‘Tell me about yourself’) interview.” During the first round, facing a “nontraditional” written case, we’re told, “you have 15 minutes to read the case and start to respond to questions, then something like 20 minutes with the interviewer to go over your answers.” To work on the case, “You are given a calculator and all the information you need.” One respondent warns that the “quantitative section of the interview is often very time consuming,” and advises that “many people don’t realize that coming up with the final answer is not really the goal—the framework is key!” A senior source mentions that candidates may be asked “to estimate the size of the market for a product, to define which strategic alternative is more attractive to the company (e.g., which business unit to invest in, which brand positioning to choose, whether to make a specific investment or not) based on hard and soft data provided by the case.” The remainder of the interview is then spent in a general “fit” conversation.

A group effort

The second-round interview is half-a-day long and “contains three components that place employees in situations as close as possible to real-life work experiences.” The first component is “an interactive group case exercise using realistic written data sets provided to the candidates.” The group exercise consists of “five applicants together in a room working on a case, with each person presenting one part of the case.” Staffers claim that this “rigorous case methodology highlights candidates’ knowledge and ability to listen, coach others and get meaningful feedback.” One consultant adds, “It is important to note that the group setting is not a competitive one—we would be happy to give everyone in a group an offer, and have also had groups where no offer was given. There isn’t one offer on the table that everyone is fighting for. Rather, it is designed to see how people work in teams.” The second interview component is “a role play of a challenging client interaction with questions and feedback.” Finally, “there is a feedback section in which the firm gauges the candidates’ ability to give and receive feedback.”

We’re also told that “there is a strong emphasis on cultural fit.” As one newbie notes, “I think Monitor expects candidates to have a good answer to the ‘Why Monitor?’ question, as we see ourselves as a unique firm and want people who really fit into this culture.”

“Summer camp for smart kids”

Monitor focuses its recruiting efforts “at a number of top universities across the country” that it considers to be its “network schools.” But, a senior source adds, “We also welcome resumes from other schools.” A good way to get a foot in the door is through one of the firm’s many summer internships. Staffers rave about the “tremendous” internship program, with one current case team leader going so far as to say it was the “best 10 weeks of my life.” And a recent hire insists that his internship “felt like summer camp for smart kids.”

More specifically, we’re told internships at the firm are “similar to full-time” positions, although interns are “only staffed on one case,” are “given much less work” and are “encouraged to have fun much more.” Former interns insist that Monitor “does a great job ensuring that the interns have fun and feel like they are a part of the firm,” and that they really get a sense of “what it is like to be a consultant.” “The responsibilities and opportunities (including travel and client exposure) that I was given were on par with those afforded to a first-year consultant at the firm,” describes one former intern. A higher-up explains, “Interns are staffed on actual case teams and have real responsibilities and deliverables. They learn how to work with other team members, conduct research, prepare findings and, in some cases, share these with the client.” A colleague states, “The way I see it, summer internships in a corporate business job can be anywhere on the spectrum from party all the time to work all the time. Monitor was happily right in the middle.” As a result, he notes, “I met great people, went on fun excursions, partied at bars, etc. But I

also had real, challenging case experiences that showed me that I wanted to try consulting. I left the internship having worked hard, and with a very good idea of what my job and life would be like post-school if I took the job full time.” As another puts it, “I don’t see any difference between the type of work I did during the summer internship and what I do now.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Culture “isn’t just a buzz word”

Staffers rave about the culture at Monitor, which they describe as “warm, open,” “collaborative, dynamic,” “fun,” “challenging,” “quirky” and “entrepreneurial.” One experienced partner reports, “Having worked with dozens of organizations over the course of my career, I am confident in saying the environment at Monitor is unparalleled.” Others agree that “culture is the absolute highlight of Monitor,” and “it isn’t just a buzz word.” We’re told the feel is that of “a family firm,” and “not at all corporate.” So, “while everybody works very hard to best serve our clients, nobody is internally competitive in terms of compensation or performance metrics.” “I am friends with many people at Monitor,” says one happy consultant, “and we frequently hang out outside of work.” Others agree that “Monitor’s culture is one that is rooted in cooperation and collaboration.” “If there is one thing that distinguishes Monitor, it is the way that the firm interacts with its employees and the way employees interact with each other,” insists a source in San Francisco. “Monitor is a place where respect is paramount; from Mark Fuller to the admin assistants, Monitor employees respect each other and each others’ time, feelings, ambitions and skills.”

Dedicated to diversity

We’re also told that Monitor is “a really comfortable place to be yourself—not an uptight, strict corporate machine.” “There is no typical Monitorite,” insists a Los Angeles-based source, who notes that his co-workers “all seem to have an interesting personal background.”

Still, while “all people are treated identically,” the firm is “is not as diverse as one would hope” when it comes to minority representation. However, we’re told that “there is now strong commitment from the managing partners to push strongly for improving hiring and mentoring of, primarily, African-American and Hispanic consultants.” Monitor has created a racial diversity network that “organizes events that promote the mission of making the workplace a vibrant and diverse place to grow, and it seeks opportunities to increase diversity at the firm.” In particular, the group holds “diversity initiatives for employees, such as the annual racial diversity conference. We bring in external speakers and individuals over varying levels within the firm, including very senior members.”

There is also a “women’s initiative, which is a group of consultants who have taken on the task, with 50 percent of their time, to work on understanding the greatest areas of need for women, understanding where we can improve and then working to create programs that meet those needs.” One female consultant reports, “Monitor does a great job bringing in talented women, and is making a concerted effort to do a better job retaining them.” A colleague agrees, “The firm sees gender diversity as an important issue, and is currently taking a number of steps to attract, develop and retain talented women within our ranks.” And a cohort in Toronto happily remarks, “As a woman, I do not feel that I have been given special treatment, but I also do not feel that I have been impeded.”

Similarly, Monitor’s GLBT network “hosts events and is involved in explaining Monitor’s commitment to diversity in sexual orientation during the recruiting process.” In fact, explains a longtimer, “this was one of the first diversity efforts that got under way at Monitor many years ago. The women’s network and the racial diversity network at Monitor both look to the GLBT network as a best-practice example.” We’re told the firm “remains committed to promoting leaders without regard to sexual orientation,” and one staffer shares an anecdote: “There was a case in which a major client did not want a gay consultant on the team, and Monitor replied, ‘This is the best team for the job—if you don’t want to work with him, then we can’t work with you.’ The client took the team.”

Create your own career

Respondents say Monitor “has a very meritocratic culture,” in which the “rate of advancement is only determined by the skills you’ve demonstrated (not an arbitrary career timeline).” A partner explains, “As a firm, we acknowledge that individuals progress at their own pace, and very rarely is that pace linear. Someone may have an extremely steep trajectory one year and be relatively flat the next, or vice versa. How quickly consultants advance is very dependent on the individual—some advance very quickly, taking on project leadership roles soon after business school, while others take a bit longer in their progression.” As a rough estimate, one source explains that “consultants advance quickly to module leader, essentially junior project manager, in about 18 to 30 months, and then to case team leader, or project manager, in about 36 months to five years.” We’re also told that “most consultants start managing people after one full year, and project leaders can have as little as three or four years of experience.” A recent hire adds, “Monitor encourages people to make a career out of the firm with or without business school.” That being said, an executive notes that for top performers who wish to get back into the classroom, the firm offers “a program under which they can have their MBA tuition fully paid for a full- or part-time program. They can precommit in return for prepayment, or we will precommit to paying when and if they return.”

Some claim it can be frustrating that there are “customized career paths with opportunities commensurate with demonstrated skills (i.e., no formal gates),” since there is a “general lack of clarity on promotions” and the policy is “ambiguous.” But while the “the pace of advancement can be pretty variable,” most staffers insist that the system is “very fair.” Moreover, many agree that Monitor is a “true meritocracy,” and one says this “is one of the things I like most about the firm.”

90-plus weeks are a possibility

When it comes to daily life at Monitor, “it is hard to develop a routine,” as “work hours are highly variable by project.” Plus, staffers explain, “Monitor has a double allocation model (50 percent on one project, 50 percent on a second project),” which means that there’s rarely downtime, especially since “slow periods on one case tend to be offset by busy periods on the other.” Some say that, overall, workweeks average out to around “the low 60s,” while others say they’re closer to “70 to 80 hours.” But one higher-up emphasizes that “no one should enter the consulting field if the thought of a 90-plus-hour week intimidates them. While that’s not the norm, this will happen sooner or later! It is the nature of the business.” Others agree, stating, “If working a lot scares you, look to other jobs.”

Just get the work done

That being said, “Monitor doesn’t have a face time culture.” As one source explains, “I would characterize Monitor as a place where people like to do great work. Once the work is done, you go home. If that takes one hour, it takes one hour; if it takes 18, it takes 18.” A colleague agrees, stating, “It’s a results-oriented environment: Work when you want, so long as the work is done.” Along those lines, we’re told that Monitor “very much wants you to have sufficient work/life balance, and provides the flexibility to allow that (work from home, flexible schedule, no face time, etc.).” As a result, a partner shares, “I have two young children, and am home for dinner with them most days by 5:30 p.m. I may wind up getting back online after they go to bed to finish something up, but I am very much able to spend the time with them, go to their school events in the middle of the day if needed, etc.” Others add, “If I want to go to dinner with friends and then pick back up with work later, that’s never once been an issue,” and “I can schedule a dentist appointment in the middle of the day, come in late, leave early whenever I want.” In addition, notes a staffer in Cambridge, “The firm does offer the option of various degrees of ‘work percentage.’ One colleague of mine decided to work 60 percent of the time to finish her PhD. The ability to structure your work schedule and hours in any way you choose is especially great for moms.”

Take time off if you need it

At the same time, “learning to say no sometimes is critically important, as it defines your own boundaries.” A partner warns, “Like any firm, client demands vary over the course of the year, and there are inevitably times when the work/life balance shifts toward the work end of the spectrum.” Others note that “most case team leaders or global account managers have lives as well, and will try to maintain a good balance, but there are times that you work with someone that is a workaholic and expects the

same from his/her teams.” All in all, though, insists a director, “we believe that individuals should be happy to perform well. There is cultural pressure to excel, but not to overwork.” In fact, a number of staffers note that “working like crazy is not perceived as a virtue, and repeatedly making your teams work unreasonable hours is an attitude that can even jeopardize career progress.”

Plus, those who find themselves getting to the point of burnout can take advantage of a sabbatical program. A source explains that “many consultants will take extended periods of time off to pursue extracurricular activities or fulfill certain goals. A recent manager of mine took off six months to walk from England to Israel, and that time off was highly encouraged by the firm.”

Travel to your heart’s content

A “reasonable” travel policy also helps staffers maintain balance. Insiders explain that “unlike other consulting firms, there is no expectation that you will be at the client site four days a week. You are absolutely there when they need you, but you are not stuck there when they don’t.” In addition, notes a recent hire, “Because Monitor offices are not organized as individual profit centers, consultants are able to be staffed to any case that makes sense geographically (i.e., you’ll never hear, ‘The partner in Boston sold the project, so it will be staffed out of Boston even though the client is in LA, next door to our LA office’).”

Others add that “travel is highly dependent on the consultant’s desire,” and “we declare year to year how much/little we want to travel.” One experienced case team leader explains, “My officemate wanted international experience, and was recently offered a three-month project in Russia. I recently finished a two-month project on the East Coast, so I asked to be staffed to the West Coast for my next project, and Monitor obliged.” Meanwhile, a staffer reports, “Recently, I joined a project that is located in San Francisco, so I have traveled to the West Coast for two weeks at a time. However, I was able to manage my expectations because I had proactively requested this assignment.” Similarly, a partner shares, “Last year, my travel schedule got quite heavy (70 percent) and it was having an impact on my personal life. I discussed it with the partners on the selling team and was able to reduce my travel to approximately 30 percent—which is quite manageable.”

Still, a junior staffer warns that because “you travel on an as-needed basis,” at times “travel is unpredictable, so you may be asked to travel from New York to Texas the day before you have to leave.” But on the flip side, notes an executive, there’s also “some flexibility to avoid travel when you have important personal commitments.” Besides which, says a case team leader, “When we travel, we travel well and stay in nice hotels/eat at nice restaurants.”

Mediocre performance means mediocre money

Opinions are mixed when it comes to compensation levels. A senior source explains why this discrepancy might exist: “The best performers get total compensation that is equal to, and sometimes better than, what they might earn at much larger competitors. However, our average performers earn less.” And a more junior staffer agrees, “My understanding is that compensation at Monitor varies significantly with performance. If you do well, it’s very pleasant, if you do solidly it’s OK, and if you do poorly they let you know.”

So while some satisfied staffers say “Monitor puts its money where its mouth is regarding its good people,” others complain: “Monitor claims they are market competitive on salary, but I really wonder where that data comes from and who they consider the competition.” One insider says that although his “base salary seems right in line with industry standards,” his “yearly bonus seems low,” while another opines, “I think we have larger bonuses here and smaller base salaries than other firms.” Regardless of the differences in opinion, it seems that some aren’t in it for the money anyway. “If any of our competitors offered me a 50 percent increase on my salary I would not leave Monitor,” insists a consultant in San Francisco.

Respondents do agree that the fact that “Monitor does not have a 401(k) matching program is a thorn in most line consultants’ side.” We’re told “there is some availability for profit sharing in the merchant banking side of our business, specifically for those who help originate deals, though due to their nature, these are generally restricted to senior members of the firm.”

Company-sponsored vacations make up for light perks

Overall, “Monitor is not heavy on perks,” and the perks that do exist “vary a lot among offices/countries.” That said, respondents do mention “public transportation subsidies or free parking,” and a doctor and a gym on site. A case team leader notes that “there is an annual holiday break for approximately 10 days when the whole firm goes on vacation (in addition to the 10 regular holidays each calendar year).” There’s also plenty of free food in the form of “a fully stocked kitchen with free soft drinks, fruit, yogurt, cheese, crackers, cereal, cookies, various coffee and teas, etc.,” “Bagel Fridays” and “in-house lunch on Wednesdays.” Insiders say each office “offers special perks,” such as “candy in Boston, Clif Bars in San Francisco, espresso in New York City and Beer Fridays in Toronto.”

There are also a number of “firm-provided opportunities to get to know colleagues, from softball and basketball leagues to parties and other special events.” For example, a staffer in San Francisco reports, “At an office level, we spend a lot of time and money building the Monitor community. This includes big social events (families included), such as renting out a park for a day in the summertime to a fancy black tie holiday party. We have a monthly wine club that tastes different varieties, two ski trips, a hiking/camping trip in Yosemite and various other events. The firm pays for all of this.” And a cohort in Toronto adds, “We have a really nice winter holiday party, a summer party where we stay overnight at a resort and another winter party where we stay overnight at a ski resort. These events are coordinated by our office.”

Optimal offices

Offices themselves are no slouch, either. Sources note, “We have amazing real estate around the globe,” and “many of our offices are new or recently remodeled, and have great locations and interesting spaces.” “The location of our Chicago office is fantastic! We have a great view and easy, in-building access to a gym and a slew of restaurants—a huge plus in the Chicago winter!” cheers a consultant. “I work in a brand new office in downtown New York with 360-degree views of the city. It’s pretty incredible,” raves a newbie. A colleague in San Francisco exclaims, “Our offices are gorgeous—lots of glass walls, warm colors and open spaces. I have a view of the Bay Bridge from my office, which always brightens my day.” And, notes a recent hire, there are “no cubicles for first-year consultants. You actually feel like a real person, as you get office space with one other person. It offers privacy and you don’t have to hear everything happening in your office.”

Make the most of mentoring

As an additional perk, a higher-up in Cambridge notes, “We are increasingly offering global opportunities for training—in Munich, San Francisco, etc.” Overall, a partner reports that “Monitor has revamped its entire formal training programs, and has invested a great deal in developing targeted training for each cohort level, as well as training for specific skills (e.g., financial modeling, consumer insight, story-lining, client management, etc.).” A colleague adds a bit of glamour, stating, “You might say we are going through a renaissance in terms of our training.”

But for the moment, a senior staffer notes, “The firm definitely believes that the most valuable and relevant training takes place on the job.” Another agrees, “Most training comes from my supportive, skilled and demanding colleagues. I’m still getting trained by my colleagues and I’ve been here forever. And I try to train others in the same way.” To that end, insists a source, “networking is key, since part of being successful at Monitor is establishing mentor/mentee relationships across multiple projects.”

Nonetheless, within the informal “mentorship, on-the-job training” framework, there are “several formal systems,” explains a source in Los Angeles. For example, “Every consultant has a professional development advisor, that is, someone senior who can provide perspective and advice about development priorities and career choices. Additionally, consultants are assigned informal buddies of their same cohort when they join the firm.” Plus, “all consultants undergo a formal feedback training session within their first several months at the firm. This training is designed to introduce consultants to the proper mechanisms for productive interaction, with each other or with clients.”

In addition, an insider explains, “There are other formal training courses that Monitor offers in the following subjects: enterprise economics, corporate finance, and customer and consumer markets. Informal training sessions, usually led by more junior consultants, usually address subjects like PowerPoint, Excel modeling, SPSS, etc.”

Solid supervisor relationships

The fact that “senior leadership at Monitor is very accessible” certainly helps make informal training more valuable. “The people here are so willing to go out of their way to spend extra time with you and answer your questions that I am so glad I didn’t have to waste more time sitting in a classroom,” explains a recent hire. A colleague agrees, “I’ve found many of my managers to be, at worst, friends and, at best, mentors and role models.” And in all, we’re told that the “very informal, nonhierarchical structure of Monitor facilitates great relationships between junior and senior people,” and that “relations between consultants, project managers and client managers are generally excellent.”

In addition, remarks a Chicago-based consultant, “I believe that there has been a very consistent and conscious effort to ensure a high level of exposure to clients. I have been very satisfied with the consistent commitment by my managers/superiors to ensure a very good level of exposure.” A colleague in Cambridge agrees, “Even as a second-year, I have had the opportunity to meet a number of C-suite clients and even take the lead in some interactions.” And a source in New York explains, “Monitor’s small-team structure (cases are never more than five or six people, including senior partners) provides consultants with unparalleled access [to clients] and a seat at the table for even the most junior consultants.”

Karaoke for charity

Staffers also come together to build strong relationships with their local communities. Insiders say that, “on the whole, the people who work here have a really strong commitment to community service and giving back.” A senior figure states, “The Monitor Institute is a specialist business unit within Monitor dedicated to strategy development for nonprofit, philanthropic and social-sector organizations to increase their social impact.” Consultants working within that group “focus their full-time work on nonprofits, etc., in the social sector.” The firm is also “part of the INSPIRE network,” which was “started by consultants at Monitor and Bain,” and through which “consultants provide pro bono services for area organizations (in addition to their normal casework).” Plus, Monitor “has very strong ties with New Profit, Inc., a nonprofit venture capital firm.” A consultant in Cambridge explains, “While not a part of Monitor, they actually sit within our offices, and each of their portfolio companies receives a Monitor mentor who is someone very senior within the firm (the CEO and founders are all mentors).”

In addition, a source explains that “each office does community-oriented events (e.g., food drives and clothing drives), often in connection with other offices to see who can have the most impact.” Plus, a junior staffer notes that the firm has “a special relationship with Teach For America that involves a fellowship there.” There’s also an annual firmwide “karaoke contest that’s run to raise money for charities.” One junior staffer is eager to report that “each year, you will find a senior partner making a fool of himself singing songs from Britney Spears.” And in a nod to the environment, adds a consultant in Toronto, “We have also gone 50 percent carbon neutral in our office in the past year, thanks to donations from individual consultants and a matching donation from the firm.”

1166 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036
Phone: (212) 345-7000
Fax: (212) 345-7414
www.mercer.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)
Offices in 41 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Communication Consulting
Health & Benefits Consulting
Human Capital Consulting
Investment Consulting
Investment Management
Mergers & Acquisitions Consulting
Outsourcing
Retirement Consulting
Surveys & Products

THE STATS

Employer Type: Subsidiary of Marsh & McLennan Companies, Inc., a Public Company
Ticker Symbol: MMC (NYSE)
Chairman & CEO: M. Michele Burns
2007 Employees: 18,000 +
2006 Employees: 16,500 +
2007 Revenue: \$3.2 billion
2006 Revenue: \$3 billion

RANKING RECAP

Practice Areas

#1 – Human Resources Consulting

UPPERS

- Excellent benefits
- Reasonable travel requirements

DOWNERS

- “Decentralized communications”
- “Stratified management structure”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.mercer.com/joiningmercerc



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “The premier HR consultants”
- “In transition”
- “Extremely friendly”
- “Poor pay”

THE SCOOP

Advising on the carrot as well as the stick

Mercer is a global human resources consulting firm headquartered in New York City. The company provides HR solutions in 41 countries, advising on the financial and retirement security, health, productivity and employment relationships of the global workforce. It seeks to strike a balance between employer (“Hold the stick like so”) and employee (“Is the carrot satisfactory?”) advocacy in providing objective, expert guidance.

The company’s portfolio of services includes communication consulting; health and benefits services; human capital services, such as performance measurement, reward management, retirement consulting, executive pay and sales force effectiveness; international consulting; investment consulting; outsourcing; and mergers and acquisitions.

The many faces of Mercer

Mercer started out in 1937 as the employee benefits department of its now parent Marsh & McLennan Companies, Inc. (MMC). It took the name William M. Mercer in 1959, following the acquisition by MMC of the Canadian firm William M. Mercer Ltd., which was then spun off as a subsidiary in 1975. More recently, in 2002, the company adopted the unmysterious name of Mercer Human Resource Consulting, but changed it yet again in September 2007, adopting the simpler Mercer LLC.

Leave it to Mercer

Mercer has ridden the rising tide of HR outsourcing demand in recent years, a logical outgrowth of trends in the consulting industry at large. The company built its outsourcing business both organically and through the 2004 acquisition of established outsourcer Synhrgy HR Technologies. Synhrgy’s business enhanced Mercer’s offerings Stateside, giving the company specialized support for employee benefits, absence management, compliance and other commonly outsourced needs.

In March 2007, Mercer signed a major outsourcing agreement with American Airlines, pursuant to which the firm will provide health and benefits, pension plan and other administrative HR services. A related offering of Mercer’s, known as co-sourcing, features the company working more directly with clients, applying resources from both outside and inside the client organization.

Rising in the East

As would be expected of a company its size, Mercer has a strong international presence. In April 2006, alongside the opening of a global operations center in Noida, India, the firm declared its intention to invest \$50 million in the country over the next three years. Further demonstrating this commitment, in February 2007, Mercer created the position of Asia business leader, tapping Rosaline Chow Koo for the job. With global demand for HR outsourcing taking off, the company believes these Far East activities will allow it to take advantage of the region’s swiftly-multiplying opportunities.

Know thy business

To stay on top of trends in HR, Mercer conducts numerous surveys and research reports. It publishes a comprehensive cost-of-living survey annually, which ranks major world cities—143 in all—based on relative affordability (with New York serving as the baseline city) of basic and general needs, such as housing, transportation, food, clothing and entertainment. The survey is used as a guideline for governments and multinational companies in determining pay for their relocated employees. In 2007, Moscow was named the most expensive city for the second straight year; Asuncion, Paraguay, was the least expensive for the fifth year running.

For the sake of precision, similar surveys are also conducted on a smaller scale, such as a January 2007 study that tracked salary trends and relative cost of living in Australia and New Zealand. Mercer undertakes additional studies on subjects like company benefits programs, employee health plans and executive compensation.

The firm's "Spotlight on Benefits" report analyzes the benefits programs of more than 1,025 employers, and for 20 years it has also conducted one of the most comprehensive surveys of employer-sponsored health plans in the U.S., as well as a highly visible annual analysis of CEO pay trends. In addition, the firm's investment consulting division publishes an array of regular performance surveys tracking results for corporate, public and foundation/endowment plans targeted toward specific audiences.

Singled out

Mercer occasionally finds itself on the other side of such surveys. In 2006, the company was declared Benefits Consultant of the Year, for the second consecutive year, by the Global Pensions Awards judges (made up of consultants and pension fund managers worldwide). In December 2006, it was named Consulting Firm of the Year for Change Management by *China STAFF*, a bilingual journal dedicated to HR management in China and Hong Kong. Capping off the banner year, the firm's investment consulting division was honored by *Financial News* as the European Investment Consultant of the Year for 2006.

GETTING HIRED

Worth the wait?

Mercer recruits at "numerous colleges across the U.S.," especially at those "with strong math programs." Both recent grads and experienced professionals interested in positions at the firm typically undergo an initial "HR screening," followed by "several interviews with various levels of consultants/business leaders." Specifics vary depending "on the career level and nature of the job," but qualified junior-level applicants "usually have a phone screening first, then a two- to four-hour interview with up to four different people." Candidates for higher-level positions start with the same process but also have "additional interviews with regional and national resources." We're told there are "no special tests," but a partner mentions that applicants for senior spots will face a "psych assessment."

Insiders say the firm's hiring process is "very thorough and lengthy"—sometimes too much so. Some feel that it "can get cumbersome" and involves "too many rounds of interviews." One associate claims the whole process took "three months" from his "first phone interview to date of hire."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

A split decision

Staffers are split when it comes to characterizing the atmosphere at Mercer. On the plus side, some say it's an "open, friendly, collaborative and flat organization," with "very focused and task-oriented people." "People are appreciated and can pretty much chart their own courses with support of management," remarks a happy staffer in Texas. A director echoes, "You are able to choose a career path within different areas of the firm and also across geographical borders." Others agree that there are "great personal development opportunities," that the firm offers "good investment on resources and tools to make the job easier" and that "people pay attention to your opinions." Overall, "the work is engaging and the people I work with are fun," states a high-spirited senior associate. And an executive praises the firm as the "most renowned and professional within our industry."

But those who are less content use harsher words, describing the culture as "fragmented" and "valueless." They warn that it's "hard to find accountable people" and that there are "no clear lines of responsibility," leading to a "lack of decision making." Similarly, although some staffers laud their supervisors as the "best" they've had in their careers, others complain about the "remote leadership" and "instability of management" as a whole. One senior source reports, for example, that "communication is sometimes lacking on high-level concerns" and "doesn't always trickle down to lower levels."

Balance is in the eye of the beholder

It's no surprise, then, that satisfaction with work hours and work/life balance differs as well. One manager who reports working 40-hour weeks states, "As a full-time working mother, Mercer provides me with the flexibility to work from home when needed." Similarly, a senior associate remarks, "I feel I have the flexibility to take personal time when I need to." A principal notes that she can "work from home and keep a part-time schedule" (which nonetheless adds up to about 40 hours a week). Others say that while "there are some late nights," hours are "mostly reasonable." Balance may not "always" be achieved, but it is "attainable, in general."

But there are some who insist that issues like "shifting priorities and lack of focus can lead to work pressures that require long, long hours." Along those lines, a senior staffer complains that a "lack of fundamental infrastructure and systems make balancing the need to grow business and manage delivery challenging."

Advance on ability

The grumbling continues when it comes to training. Insiders say that although the firm offers a "combination" of formal and informal training through "mentoring, self-studies and multiple official opportunities, many feel that what's offered isn't enough. One senior associate who is frustrated with having to pick up the slack complains, "Some of the junior-level staff need a lot of mentoring, and that can take a significant portion of time."

But in better news, staffers agree that promotions are "based on merit," and that "consultants advance as quickly as they indicate they are able to assume more responsibility." There's no up-or-out policy, and as one longtimer reports, "Some employees stay in same position for long periods if they are not interested in moving up."

Reasonable time on the road

Staffers are also of the mind that "not very many people travel a lot" at Mercer. Few report spending more than two days a week off site, if that. An associate says his schedule involves "moderate travel," which he "chooses to do" since it's "not required to do my job." A co-worker explains, "Most senior people involved in revenue generation do the traveling," and even for them, we're told the time spent on the road is manageable. For example, a principal reports, "it's within my control—very flexible." Some even consider the "international clients and opportunities for travel" to be a perk.

Contention over compensation

Compensation meets with less positive feedback. Many respondents say their base salary is low for the industry. A senior associate reports that "raises and bonuses are not that great compared to other organizations," adding, "The top raise to the bottom raise seems to not have a large differential. Talent should be rewarded." And despite being more satisfied with her salary than others, a higher-up in Houston complains, "Salary increases have been minimal in recent years, resulting in salary falling behind those of competitors. This needs to be addressed." A principal mentions that Mercer offers "a profit-sharing contribution in 401(k)," but feels that the firm should "bring retirement benefits up to market or above market, and improve bonus amounts."

On the plus side, we're told Mercer provides "excellent health care coverage" (including "same-sex partner insurance coverage") in a "flexible benefits plan." Other perks include "free parking" and an "AMEX corporate card," as well as pet insurance. An associate in Maine adds, "Mercer provides aesthetically pleasing office space that really makes coming to work easy."

Caring for the community

In addition, Mercer is "community-oriented" and participates in various charitable causes. The firm does "pro bono consulting on a broad level, actively promotes volunteer programs among employees and frequently supports clothing drives." Specific charities the firm is involved with include Dress for Success, the Food Bank, United Way and 911 Day. A source in Texas adds that the firm has "community outreach programs in the local community involving agencies supporting children's services and repairing homes for indigent people."

On the diversity front, respondents tell us Mercer promotes “equal opportunities for all” and “has an active diversity program.” “Our culture and people seem very diverse,” remarks one associate. The firm’s “CEO is female,” and insiders say that, overall, there are “lots of women in leadership.”

1633 Broadway, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10019
Phone: (212) 492-4500
Fax: (212) 492-4743
www.deloitte.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

Over 80 offices in the US, with strategy and operations hubs in 20 major cities

PRACTICE AREAS

Enterprise Applications
Human Capital
Outsourcing
Strategy & Operations
Technology Integration

THE STATS

Employer Type: Subsidiary of Deloitte LLP, US Member Firm of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu

Deloitte Consulting LLP Chairman & CEO: Doug Lattner

2007 Employees: 40,998 (Deloitte LLP)

2006 Employees: 37,118 (Deloitte LLP)

2007 Revenue: \$9.85 billion

2006 Revenue: \$8.7 billion



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Good for young people to develop"
- "Looks good from the outside, but very political on the inside"
- "Strong culture, family-friendly"
- "Travel is your job"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

- #3 – Operational Consulting
- #5 (Tie) – Human Resources Consulting
- #6 – Energy Consulting
- #6 – Financial Consulting
- #6 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting

Quality of Life

- #6 – Formal Training
- #11 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #15 – Firm Culture
- #18 (Tie) – Offices

Diversity

- #5 – Best Firms for Diversity
- #6 – Diversity for Minorities
- #7 – Diversity for Women
- #8 – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- "Size and breadth of offerings make it possible to gain exposure to a wide variety of consulting environments and experiences"
- Networking opportunities with all levels of the firm (analyst to partner)
- MBA tuition reimbursement program
- "Substantial latitude in following personal professional interests"

DOWNERS

- No performance bonus structure for the most junior staff
- "Projects often last longer than expected, with frequent extensions"
- The expectation of involvement in internal projects as well as client-facing projects
- "Market perception of Deloitte as primarily technology-focused"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.deloitte.com/us/consultingcareers

THE SCOOP

In the web

Deloitte's consulting arm is a subsidiary of Deloitte LLP (Deloitte), which is itself part of the Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu web of branded organizations deploying professional services, including audit, financial advisory, risk management, tax and, of course, consulting. Member firms are categorized geographically, with Deloitte serving the U.S. Overall, DTT now has offices in 142 countries worldwide, with member firms in emerging markets such as India and China.

The consulting group operates through five practices: enterprise applications, human capital, outsourcing, strategy and operations, and technology integration. Its clients come from a wide range of industries, including consumer products and services, health care, financial services, manufacturing, energy, real estate, telecommunications, energy, media and high tech, as well as the public sector.

Laughing last

Deloitte is unique among the Big Four accounting firms for continuing with an integrated consulting business following the Enron and Andersen debacle. The incident prompted Deloitte's fellow accounting siblings (PricewaterhouseCoopers, KPMG and Ernst & Young) to spin off their consulting wings to avoid conflicts of interest. Deloitte, too, intended such a change, and in 2002 was preparing a separate entity called Braxton, but the company canceled the divestiture at the very threshold of its unveiling (Braxton even had its own logo—a red and yellow shield), citing the risk of failure in a weak market. Whether a prescient move or merely dumb luck, continuing under the same corporate roof has proven advantageous, as the firm has shown significant revenue growth year over year since 2004 (in part because consulting services tend to be more profitable than auditing). In 2007, the remaining three quarters of the Big Four returned to the consulting game, as the noncompete agreements with their spin-offs came to an end.

Supplying strategy

Deloitte's strategy and operations practice advises clients on pivotal decisions and works with clients to execute changes based on knowledge of corporate and competitive strategy, customer and market strategy, supply chain and operations, mergers and acquisitions, financial management, outsourcing advisory strategy, performance improvement and other areas. In an engagement with a large U.S. financial services company that was having difficulty complying with its financial reporting requirements, Deloitte stepped in with a sweeping plan. It hired, trained and coached new personnel, redesigned the company's reporting processes to limit what had become a severe dilution of responsibility for data, and developed a method of self-evaluation through which the company could verify its reports early and often. Since the project, the financial services company has issued its quarterly statements on time, as the processing time has improved from 60 days to less than 20 days. Its total cost reduction is expected to exceed \$25 million annually.

Learn to share

The firm's performance improvement practice deals with similar issues, with a more pointed approach through enterprise cost management, expansion strategy, capital and real estate transformation, and the implementation of shared services. The shared services business model centralizes support operations into a single unit. This consolidation of simple functions increases back-office efficiencies by eliminating redundancy and lubricating the flow of processes. According to Deloitte's 2007 Global Shared Services Study, reducing costs and improving controls remain top benefits of shared services operations, but many organizations are achieving other benefits, including process efficiency and increased transparency and visibility of data.

In 2008, the firm released a study on the enterprise cost management trends of 70 Fortune 500 companies. It found that two-thirds of the companies attempt a cost improvement initiative at least once each year, and one-third seek significant improvements (double-digit cost reductions). Of the companies surveyed, 78 percent consider cost improvement a high priority.

Matchmaker

Deloitte's mergers and acquisitions team has assisted in a variety of transactions, including mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, joint ventures and alliances. It has access to a global network of experts and has completed more than 400 engagements. Services include M&A strategy and capability building (preparing a client for the rigors of the transaction), target screening (due diligence), transaction execution (ensuring compliance as well as the best value for the client), divestitures and integration (helping transition the new organization into being with minimal disruption to any merging entity).

Top brass

Barry Salzberg was elected CEO of Deloitte in 2007—"elected" being the operative word because his ascension to the rank was a result of a management succession process that occurs every four years. Salzberg, a managing partner who had been with the company since 1977, replaced James Quigley, who took on duties as the global CEO of DTT. Heading up the consulting unit is Doug Lattner, another company stalwart who came on in 1975 and who was chosen internally to be chairman and CEO of Deloitte Consulting LLP in 2003. Lattner, known for his work with clients in the electric, gas and telecommunications industries, was named to *Consulting* magazine's 2005 list of the Top 25 Most Influential Consultants.

In March 2008, Punit Renjen was named the national managing director of the strategy and operations practice in the U.S. He also serves as the global strategy and operations practice leader and sits on the Deloitte & Touche USA LLP board of directors. Renjen appeared on *Consulting* magazine's 2007 list of the Top 25 Consultants.

Chairman Sharon Allen is a high-profile figure as well. In 2003, she became the first female chairman of a major professional services organization, a feat driven home again by her 2007 re-election for another four-year term. Named one of *Forbes'* Most Powerful Women in the World in 2006 and 2007, she also serves on the President's Export Council and on the Women's Leadership Board at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Those are not the only feathers in Allen's cap, however—she was honored in 2007 with the Work Life Legacy Award from the Families & Work Institute for her guidance and support of workforce programs, along with the Compass Award from the Women's Leadership Exchange for helping to promote a positive perception of women as leaders.

Other big fish

Not all Deloitte's big names are running the show, though, due to the firm's penchant for hiring federal executives as consultants. In February 2007, John Dalrymple, former deputy commissioner of the IRS, joined up as a consultant. In 2006, it hired Tom Ridge, former secretary of Homeland Security and a past Pennsylvania governor, as a senior advisor in its public-sector practice, particularly in the area of services to state governments. Ridge advises on the use of information technology in effective government. Additional crossovers from government include David Brant, once a director of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and Janet Hale, a former undersecretary of management at the Department of Homeland Security. Tommy Thompson, another past governor (Wisconsin, in this case), and the former Department of Health and Human Services secretary, acts as independent chairman of the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions. Mary Corrado, who was chief financial officer of the CIA, is a director in the intelligence consulting practice.

Dutifully disseminating

Through the support of Deloitte Research, another Deloitte member firm, the company releases reports, studies and publications that address current business trends and issues. Topics run the gamut, focusing on such issues as consumer business, energy and resources, financial services, health care, the public sector, technology, globalization and demographics. Consultants and other employees are also featured in a series of free, downloadable podcasts called *Deloitte Insights*, a platform from which they discuss many of the same issues explored in the company's studies. The series, used by several domestic and foreign universities in their MBA programs, reached its 100th episode in January 2008.

Staying involved

The firm certainly recognizes its responsibilities as a global company. Its contributions include pro bono work, nonprofit board service and broad philanthropy, and it encourages employees to volunteer by offering sabbaticals and flexible scheduling.

In 2008, Deloitte hosted its ninth annual day of community services called IMPACT Day. Approximately 32,500 participants volunteered to assist in more than 700 projects, one-quarter of which were skills-based. In one project, colleagues in New Orleans dedicated their time and energy to rebuilding efforts, such as restoring a garden at a school that had been severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Elsewhere, teams worked to brighten up schools, camps or other nonprofit facilities where needs are increasing and resources have been stretched. Deloitte has definitively pledged to invest up to \$50 million on pro bono engagements, through which it will advise nonprofits in the same manner it advises billion-dollar corporations, boosting their performance in the social sector.

Collecting laurels

Deloitte is frequently recognized by the media and other groups for its culture and business methods. In May 2008, the firm ranked No. 9 on *Fortune's* 100 Most Desirable MBA Employers, and in September 2007, *BusinessWeek* named it No. 1 on its list of Best Place to Launch a Career. In 2007, for the 14th consecutive year, it was named one of the 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers by *Working Mother* magazine. Deloitte was additionally honored that year as a best place to work for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Deloitte Canada, not lying content in the shadow of its southern sister firm, took a spot on *Canadian Business* magazine's 2006 and 2007 Best Workplaces in Canada ranking.

GETTING HIRED

Practice your mental math

Deloitte recruits from “the nation’s top undergraduate and MBA programs,” and insiders say there is “a very structured process for school candidates.” For undergraduates, it generally begins with on-campus interviews (“case and behavioral”), followed by an office visit. A source explains, “The case is to test how you think on your feet, i.e., how would you fare leading a senior-level client meeting. The behavioral interview is to get to know you—your background, experiences, etc.” We’re told there are “no special tests” involved and, in total, qualified candidates can expect “the chance to interact with approximately eight people during the interview process.” One consultant advises that, “at the undergraduate level, there is a lot of concern for fit, instead of exclusively academic performance or professional background.” In addition, advises a senior consultant, “the cases are pretty tough, and we expect our candidates to have business sense, understand business concepts such as revenue and cost drivers, and be able to do simple math without a calculator.” He adds, “This last point is a big one—it seems like an easy expectation, but we’ve found that undergraduates are just not strong at ‘public math.’”

On the MBA level, the “case questions are much more probing.” One longtimer recommends that MBA candidates should “know what is going on in the business world, because often the interviewer will casually pop in a question like, ‘So why do you think Delta and Northwest would want to merge?’” A manager notes that a typical MBA case question might be similar to the following: “Our client is one of the largest retailers in the world with approximately \$80 billion in revenue. It plans to open between 400 and 500 new stores within five years, and is also evaluating a strategy to diversify by aggressively growing one of its business lines. They have three options to pursue growth targets for the installation service business: internally build, acquire or franchise. Your firm has been engaged by the COO to develop a growth strategy over the next five years. How would you help the client determine a strategy?”

Summers true to real life, with the occasional ATV ride

Summer internships are common at Deloitte, and former interns say the experience is “amazing and fairly true to life as a full-time employee.” Interns “are assigned buddies and counselors” to guide them, and there are “office trainings and events for summer interns to network and learn as much about the firm as possible.” At the same time, they are “staffed as regular consultants (at that level) on a project completing real client work.” A senior consultant remembers his experience: “In addition to a week in San Francisco with the nationwide summer associate class, I had the opportunity to work on two projects: a market-entry project for a small spin-off where I took a lead role, as well as a customer market strategy project for a multibillion-dollar Japanese motor sports manufacturer with a larger team. We even had the chance to do a product demo day with the motor sports manufacturer, riding dirt bikes and ATVs on a track.” Another recalls fondly, “There was also a lot of wining and dining.” Deloitte holds national conferences, typically in the middle of the summer, to facilitate both undergrad and MBA interns in getting to know each other and the firm.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Laugh away the late nights

“We might work late,” says a practitioner at Deloitte, “but we’re still laughing at 2 a.m.” Insiders agree that, in the firm’s “very collegial and extremely collaborative” culture, the “intelligent people seem to enjoy working with each other, and look out for one another and feel connected.” A senior consultant reports, “We work with people that we genuinely want to be surrounded by,” while a manager adds, “It’s a near-universal truth that you would truly enjoy going out for a drink with colleagues after work.” As a result, a business analyst praises, “It’s refreshing and invigorating when you can reflect on a day’s work and realize that you not only learned something new, but had a great time doing it.”

Despite all of that collegiality, things do have a tendency to get “competitive, since everyone strives to perform at a high level.” But, notes a senior consultant, “leadership does a great job at building a sense of unity and teamwork throughout the organization.” A senior source adds, “I believe that the most successful and well-respected people here are the ones who do what they can to make the people around them successful.” A colleague feels the same way: “Being surrounded by motivated and intelligent people naturally allows me to perform even better and up my game.”

Choose your own adventure

We’re also told that Deloitte offers a “nonhierarchical and meritocratic” environment. A senior consultant states, “From day one, you work side by side with the firm’s senior leaders and are able to contribute up to (and sometimes beyond) your capabilities.” Respondents add that Deloitte is “very entrepreneurial,” and “if you have an interest in something, the firm supports you.” Plus, a manager remarks, “We’re encouraged to play an active role in making the office an interesting place to be.” A colleague echoes, “Practitioners are encouraged to get involved in firm development activities. If you don’t like something, you have the power to change it.” In fact, notes a recent hire, “we have an exceptional business analyst action committee program, where a council of BAs and consultants work tirelessly to improve their own program. It’s an awesome way to improve your own experience and I have not seen anything with this level of intensity and involvement at any other consulting firm.” “It is amazing that we get to shape our own future and our own program,” agrees another.

Surf with your boss

Along these lines, the firm is also “very democratic.” Sources say “senior managers hang out with business analysts at surfing events,” and it’s not uncommon for “senior consultants to challenge the opinions of partners.” One insider comments, “I can call any partner within the firm for career advice and subject matter expertise, and it would be considered quite normal.” A consultant adds, “The senior leaders with whom I work are truly interested in my development, both personally and professionally. They work hard to provide opportunities that both challenge and interest me. Further, they are approachable and provide assistance

whenever it is requested.” “Our leadership is responsive, accessible and makes time for practitioners. I personally feel like people are concerned about me from both a personal and professional perspective. They invest a lot in me and are always looking out to give me the best opportunities to help grow my career. They provide very constructive positive feedback and areas for development,” a manager concurs.

That being said, one newbie notes that the “size and breadth” of Deloitte means that “networking and reputation are pivotal to success”—which “may not be an environment cut out for everyone.” Another adds, “You have to know what you want and know how to build relationships with people. This is not easy for everyone.”

Still, Deloitte does watch out for its own. Sources say the firm “does a very good job of ensuring that you interact as often as possible with clients,” noting that they “have had the opportunity to develop very strong client relationships.” One manager even states, “I have two to three clients from every engagement that I have been on that I still keep in contact with on a regular basis.” And a more junior source adds, “I am incredibly fortunate to have spoken with CEOs of multibillion-dollar companies and to have traveled the world with senior executives.”

Learn by example

To help foster career growth, Deloitte “has a great career counseling/mentorship program” conducted through “an apprenticeship model.” A higher-up explains that “informal training is critical and is an integral part of the job every day,” adding, “I expect every member of my team to act as informal mentors to those who are junior to them, and to help the whole team learn about their areas of expertise.” Indeed, most agree that “some of the best training you get is on-site training from your partner/senior manager/manager.”

Forty hours of formality

There’s also plenty of formal training, with a “minimum requirement of 40 hours of training per year” that’s conducted in a “classroom or virtual classroom.” In fact, we’re told, “you cannot get promoted without having fulfilled certain requirements by level,” and “many exceed that requirement.” A senior consultant says “it can be tough to meet the 40 hours when you’re staffed on a busy project,” but adds that “project leaders understand the importance of training and are as flexible as they can be, allowing practitioners to attend live trainings when they’re offered (typically on Fridays).”

All “new analysts receive one week of in-office training,” followed by “a second week of national training in a common location.” As another demonstration of the firm’s emphasis on learning, “business analysts participate in a BA rotational program, which ensures that they receive a variety of roles and project experiences in their first two years.” “The program caps project durations at six months, and provides analysts with exposure to at least two different industries, three clients and three distinct project roles,” an analyst explains.

In a nutshell, describes a manager, “training is a top priority of the firm and a lot of time and money is invested in training our practitioners.” She adds, “We have curriculums by level, required courses for promotions and a required number of hours annually for training. Deloitte offers an infinite number of e-learning courses, local office classroom sessions, webinars and national training events.” A recent hire hammers home the point: “This is definitely one of the areas in which Deloitte excels, as it demonstrates how the company truly cares for the skills and knowledge set its employees have.” Plus, training isn’t all work. A senior consultant notes, “We have a really good time at our trainings. We stay at the best hotels (e.g., Westin on Ocean Drive in Ft. Lauderdale—I sat on the beach each morning), and we always have open bar.”

Relax on the weekends

Staffers say the firm “definitely encourages manageable work hours,” with an official mandate of “no less than 45 hours a week.” Most insiders report workweeks ranging from 50 to 60 hours. Some say they choose to spend longer hours in the office during the week, but then “take the weekends off.” In fact, a manager comments, “There’s been some momentum around limiting the number of weekend e-mails, in an effort to help folks separate away from work. The fact that this is starting to circulate and has

support is a great example of how serious Deloitte is at getting folks to balance work and life effectively.” Few respondents claim to spend more than a handful of weekends a year on the job, and even then they are usually just “partial” commitments.

A few respondents do warn that, although the hours are generally manageable, Deloitte “encourages significant effort outside of client work, which compounds the time spent on work during a typical week.” That is, there’s a “high expectation that everyone will participate in/lead internal initiatives (such as mentoring, community involvement, recruiting).” The “significant hours this nonclient work can take up,” one claims, “contributes to many of us feeling almost like we’re working two jobs—the client services career and the firm contribution obligations.”

Put that magic wand away

Ultimately, “there’s no magic” to achieving a work/life balance at the firm; rather, balance takes “compromise and negotiation, and it’s up to each individual to proactively manage his or her own balance.” “I have found that setting boundaries and proactively planning key events in my life has helped me to balance my work and personal life,” explains a manager. Plus, although the “long hours and a consistent travel schedule make balance difficult,” insiders note that “managers generally do their best to accommodate practitioners’ personal needs” and, in general, “people really respect your personal life, weekends and vacations.” According to a senior source, “At the beginning of projects, we review goals, work styles and priorities, and try to be as accommodating as possible, and set expectations and guidelines up front.” “For example,” shares a San Francisco-based consultant, “I have been able to leave work early if I have a class at night, or if I want to attend special events (e.g., family in town, graduate school information sessions).” And a consultant in Ohio reiterates that “while the travel can be difficult at times, my co-workers recognize the rigors of the consulting lifestyle and go out of their way to allow you to attend to personal matters that you need.”

It helps that “there is a lot of freedom and autonomy at Deloitte, which gives you a lot of leeway with your job.” Plus, “the culture is quite outcome-oriented and face time is generally not important”—as one source puts it, “So as long as you get the job done well, it doesn’t really matter how you spend your time.” A co-worker agrees, “You put in the hours you need, when you need to, and as long as you’re performing, you’ll find Deloitte to be very flexible.”

Additionally, there are “25 days a year” of vacation (with “additional days off when we’re doing well fiscally”). A senior consultant says he’s “taken every single day,” and a manager insists, “I have always been able to take vacations, even in the middle of busy projects.” Also, “working from home is well accepted, and teams know how to work together and make it productive,” a respondent notes.

Palatable travel

When it comes to travel, some staffers say they “have been able to remain on projects within a commutable distance” from their office. This situation is more common among those in the San Francisco office where “the effect of travel is not as demanding as in other locations.” Sources also insist that “Deloitte makes every effort to match practitioners with projects that fit their skill sets and needs, so if working on a local project is important, every effort will be made to make that happen.” For example, a new mom reports, “I just returned from maternity leave and have worked with the firm to identify a local project where I would have no travel requirements, and work out a flexible work arrangement where I work 35 hours per week.”

But for most, travel is simply “part of the job,” and is often considered a plus—as a business analyst explains, “Many of the most interesting and challenging client requests exist only at a global/national level, and if you want that kind of exposure, you need to make yourself available on that scale. If you do, the benefits can outweigh the inconveniences.” Making travel even more palatable is the “alternative travel” policy, which means that “if your ticket to a more desirable destination is less than your ticket home, you can go to the desirable location for the weekend instead of returning home.” Another benefit? The ability to “keep all miles and points from airports, hotels and car rentals.”

Keeping to a schedule

When on the road, consultants “are on site at the client Monday through Thursday, and in our home office on Friday.” Adds a Midwesterner, “I have never had to stay over a weekend.” “In the one-and-a-half years I’ve been at the firm—and I’ve been traveling almost since the day I joined—there has been only one instance when I had to leave on a Sunday,” a manager in Texas shares. Since the schedule is reasonably consistent, sources say “everyone understands that Thursday afternoon is the ‘get home’ part of the week, so calls and meetings are minimized at that time.” Then, continues a colleague, “Friday tends to be a time to focus on your home office and participate in culture-building and knowledge-sharing activities in the office.” Perhaps as a result of the 3-4-5 standard, some say “it is quite difficult to work internationally.”

But the schedule isn’t written in stone, which can sometimes work out for the best. An insider comments, “Last summer I was on a client project and the firm (and the client) was kind enough to entertain my request for a corporate apartment. It was great to have my wife and kids with me for two straight months and to enjoy all the great things Washington, D.C., has to offer.”

Balance your life, if not your checkbook

There’s one catch to the “tremendous value associated with the culture and work/life balance” at Deloitte, says a manager, which is that the firm is “not paying top dollar.” He elaborates, “The firm acknowledges it does not pay at the top of the market,” adding, “The client experiences and the quality of colleagues are both top notch, so Deloitte offers a real choice to those that feel they want more from an employer than a big check every two weeks.”

But not everyone agrees that salaries are low. A source on the West Coast reports, “I believe the firm is very fair and competitive on compensation. Recent increases have been very good, given our outstanding results. Pay is largely driven by performance.” Others say “compensation is based on a rating you receive at year end,” and that “those who are the highest performing are also the best compensated, sometimes by better than 40 percent more.”

Bummer bonuses

But the main complaint seems to be that “the variable compensation (or lack thereof) is very poor.” Specifically, a senior manager states, “financial benefits, such as 401(k) and health care, are less generous than competitors’.” And, the “firm does not offer bonuses for those below senior consultant level.” Even for higher-ups, “Bonuses are rarely more than 15 percent of base.” As a result, even those who find the base salary to be “very competitive” say that “not receiving any form of a bonus makes the firm a bit less competitive in this area.” According to one, “I think base salary is comparable with other tier-one strategy firms, but the bonus structure is far less.” A business analyst in New York adds, “I do not feel that I am compensated enough for the hours I contribute to work. There is also a lack of monetary incentive that rewards more junior employees.”

Perhaps in an attempt to make up for the lack of a bonus, we’re told that “at the staff level, Deloitte often gives ‘applause awards’ for outstanding performance. These awards are monetary and can be used to purchase gift certificates.” A colleague opines, “Although Deloitte doesn’t give analysts any type of formal bonus based on performance at year end, there is a very rewarding salary increase, more so, I would say, than at competitors or in other industries looking at a year-over-year basis.” Plus, bonuses for junior practitioners may be in the works, respondents hope, since “fiscal year 2007 was the first year Deloitte offered bonuses to senior consultants.” An analyst predicts that bonuses “are making their way down the ladder,” and adds, “Hopefully in the next few years they will be available at all levels.”

Make the most of an MBA

Naturally, there are other perks, including ski trips, surf classes, great health and fitness subsidies, wine tastings, sports teams, diversity groups and cooking classes. “They also have a ton of discounts on electronics, automobiles, travel, etc.” A Boston-based insider notes that “each consulting office location does an annual fun outing,” adding that her office “has a sailboat race out to one of the islands in Boston Harbor (you can choose to opt out and take the big boat, with open bar).”

Perhaps the perk that stands out the most is that “tuition reimbursement for business school is also provided.” A senior consultant details, “Deloitte has a tuition reimbursement program for MBAs who were either former business analysts or who were summer associates (MBA interns). As a BA/consultant, there is a rigorous process to get into a graduate school assistance program, whereupon the BA/C will go to business school, come back to the firm as a senior consultant, and over two years will be reimbursed for two years of tuition. Returning summer associates are reimbursed for one year of tuition.” He adds, “If, as a former BA, you leave after one year, you still get one year of tuition reimbursed.”

Climb up or get counseled out

Of course, it’s worth noting that “there is no continuous career path from consultant to senior consultant” at Deloitte; instead, “an MBA is required.” As a result, “consultants are expected to leave for business school within two years.” From then on, “advancement is typically two to three years” from senior consultant to manager and from manager to senior manager, and then “three to five years” to partner. The firm notes, however, that consultants will have the opportunity to get sponsored for grad school after having been with the organization three to four years, and that, while there is no formal continuous career path, exceptions are made for consultants with outstanding records. Insiders, meanwhile, feel “there is an up-or-out mentality,” and “those who do not improve as expected are counseled out”—in those cases, a senior manager notes, “the firm helps find other career opportunities for these individuals.”

Pumping in style

Starting a family is no compelling reason to leave the firm, since Deloitte is “very good at supporting new parents.” In addition to “two weeks” of paternity leave and “eight to 12 weeks” of maternity leave, there are “many additional resources/services for new parents.” For example, “when you have a child, the firm will subsidize the cost of a top-of-the-line breast pump—even if you are male.” And one new mom describes that “most offices have a mothers’ lounge for nursing mothers.”

When it comes to other office perks, Deloitte’s offerings are limited to “ergonomic work stations and unlimited coffee/tea/water service.” But as a Boston-based source explains, “I know that other consulting firms have far better offices where there are games, break rooms, cafés, etc. As great as those things are, they’d be an absolute waste of money due to the number of hours that our folks spend in the office this week. I’d rather have the office we have and get more money put into my pocket.” A co-worker reports that what’s exceptional about Deloitte’s offices is that “we’ve started an initiative to green our offices, called ‘greening the dot.’ We have a number of programs to reduce energy and paper consumption, reduce waste production, increase recycling and reduce travel where we can by using technologies such as web- and teleconferencing.” She adds, “I think the coolest part of our initiative is that we’re relocating where we can into LEED- (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified buildings, and are incorporating LEED principles into our future workspaces to increase efficiency in energy and water usage.”

Dedicated to diversity

Deloitte is also ahead of the game when it comes to gender diversity. Respondents say the firm’s women’s initiative has “promoted a number of issues related to mentoring and retention of women, as well as in the broader community.” One senior consultant shares, “As a female, I’ve felt virtually no difference within the firm in terms of hiring, promoting, mentoring, etc. I feel extremely comfortable that I can be as successful as any male within the firm.” Plus, a female manager adds, “Deloitte has a significantly larger percentage of women partners than other consulting firms.”

However, another insider remarks, “We do much better with our women’s initiative than with minority diversity efforts.” An African-American manager comments that although “diversity within all of Deloitte is good,” diversity “within our strategy and operations consulting practice is very poor.” A source agrees that “we have a long road toward getting to a point where minorities are as successful as they should be here,” but adds that “the firm is really committed” to making that happen. And we’re told there are “multiple minority organizations at the local office level,” which hold “many events and networking activities throughout the year.”

Similarly, “GLBT initiatives are well organized” and are “a high priority for the firm.” In addition, “several GLBT partners are prominent and open in the organization.” One openly gay practitioner notes, “We have an open and comfortable environment for GLBT employees, even though we do not explicitly recruit GLBT candidates in our recruiting processes. Overall, this is a great place to work for GLBT employees, and is recognized as such in GLBT surveys and ratings.” As one expression of this supportive environment, “Deloitte sponsored the gay pride parade last year in Atlanta.”

Making an impact

In fact, the firm is extremely active in the community as a whole. On its annual IMPACT Day, all “40,000 employees participate in a local volunteer campaign.” In addition, there are “dozens of community service initiatives spanning many interest areas,” including “pro bono consulting for a number of local charities,” “starting a fund-raising nonprofit called Philanthro Productions,” holding “business clothing drives” and participating in “walks/runs for breast cancer.” Other specific supported organizations include The United Way and Junior Achievement. In an additional charitable effort, “each month we have a jeans day, where we pay \$5 for a given charity to wear jeans in the office.”

1166 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036
Phone: (212) 345-8000
www.oliverwyman.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

Over 40 offices in 16 countries worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Automotive
Aviation, Aerospace & Defense
Communications, Media & Technology
Energy
Financial Services
Health & Life Sciences
Industrial Products & Services
Retail & Consumer Products
Surface Transportation

THE STATS

Employer Type: Subsidiary of Marsh & McLennan Companies, Inc., a Public Company
Ticker Symbol: MMC (NYSE)
President & CEO: John P. Drzik
2008 Employees: 2,900
2007 Employees: 2,500 +
2007 Revenue: \$1.5 billion
2006 Revenue: \$1.2 billion

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#3 – Financial Consulting
#6 – Human Resources Consulting

Quality of Life

#2 – Compensation
#16 – Work/Life Balance
#19 – Best Firms to Work For

UPPERS

- “Working with the best and brightest”
- “You can move up quickly if you do well”
- “Relaxed, accepting attitude”
- “Spectacular international work opportunities”

DOWNERS

- “There’s only one speed: full steam ahead”
- “Lack of transparency during the staffing process”
- “Infrastructure hasn’t kept up with growth”
- “I wish the rest of the world knew more about us”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.oliverwyman.com/careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Great finance folks”
- “In transition”
- “Getting great people”
- “Very rigid structure”

THE SCOOP

Wyman wafer

Oliver Wyman, a New York-based management consulting firm, is one of the many layers of Marsh & McLennan Companies (MMC), the professional services and insurance brokerage giant. Within the MMC superstructure, it is a member firm of the Oliver Wyman Group, which also includes Lippincott and NERA Economic Consulting. The company's layer is a thick one, though, employing 2,900 at more than 40 offices in 16 countries, and generating \$1.5 billion in revenue in 2007. Cross-specializing by industry and expertise, it offers clients strategy, operations, risk management, organizational transformation and leadership development. Industry specializations include automotive, aviation, aerospace and defense, communications, media and technology, energy, industrial products and services, health and life sciences, retail and consumer products, and surface transportation, as well as a highly diversified financial services practice, which serves the world's largest investment, corporate and retail banks, and insurance companies.

Though Oliver Wyman has complicated roots dating back to predecessors in 1970s Boston and Washington, D.C., and 1980s New York, the firm assumed its current form only as recently as May 2007, when Mercer Oliver Wyman (focused on financial services management consulting), Mercer Management Consulting (general management consulting) and Mercer Delta Organizational Consulting (organization and leadership consulting) combined under the Oliver Wyman umbrella.

A full complement

The financial services practice, formerly the domain of Mercer Oliver Wyman, assists C-level executives and other senior management on strategic issues, as well as risk, capital and performance measurement, and risk governance during periods of regulatory change.

Oliver Wyman's general management consulting business, which provides consulting services to corporations in a wide range of industries, was built under the Mercer Management Consulting brand. The business transformation practice, essentially an organizational and operational turnaround service, alters the business models of underperforming or failing clients. The goal is to lower the cost of operation, while also investing in the creation of a new or better draw for customers and, ultimately, to weather the entire transition with a fully intact business. The marketing and sales practice is broader, but uses similar methods within an environment of lesser duress. The "customer proposition" (price, product, service and brand) is examined for possible improvements, spending is critiqued and optimized, and the sales force is monitored and assessed. Oliver Wyman reports that, as a result of engagements, clients realize average profit improvements of 5 to 10 percent through revenue increases and/or spending reductions. The firm also has one of the largest communications practices, using its knowledge of customer value and business creation to help launch about 50 major cell phone service operators around the world. Further, a health and life sciences unit serves health care payers and providers, as well as pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms, and venture capital funds serving the health care industry.

The remaining practices are operations and technology and strategy. Operations and technology offers IT organization design and IT economics management in a framework of Lean Six Sigma principles (Lean Six Sigma is a combination of Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma, two established business protocols of speed and quality originally devised by Toyota and Motorola). The practice also offers sourcing (i.e., assistance in procurement of goods and services). In strategy, Oliver Wyman advises on growth and business portfolio management, mergers and acquisitions, and performance improvement, and assists in implementation and execution of its recommendations.

Delta force

The firm's organization and leadership practice, carrying over the Delta brand from its days as Mercer Delta, advises CEOs, board members and other senior corporate leaders on maximizing their individual and organizational capabilities. The practice

addresses issues related to organizational design and transformation, as well as leadership and board effectiveness through performance assessments, transformational change, and coaching and leadership development.

On the fly

In a recent project for a major North American airline, Oliver Wyman developed a five-year strategic plan for a complete operation and financial restructuring. The plan involved changes to market planning, route strategy, flight profitability, yield management and customer segmentation. Additionally, Oliver Wyman helped negotiate several significant financial deals, including more than \$4 billion in aircraft operating and leveraged leases, and even the eventual sale of the airline. This led to a new management team and board of directors, which Oliver Wyman helped transition in, as well as the creation of a strategic alliance, overseen by the firm, with another major carrier. In the final calculation, Oliver Wyman helped turn an almost \$200 million loss into a \$100 million profit.

Sororal support

When an engagement calls for knowledge outside of Oliver Wyman's proven capabilities, the client can turn to the other MMC wafers. The borrow-able expertise of its sister companies includes brand and identity management from Lippincott, microeconomic analysis from NERA, insurance expertise from Marsh and Guy Carpenter, human resources strategy from Mercer and security and investigative work from Kroll.

Get and spend

Oliver Wyman has expanded its global reach and service capabilities through strategic acquisitions, especially in the high-end proprietary research space. In March 2008, it picked up Hemeria, a Parisian management consulting firm specializing in performance improvement. The addition, which brings in 80 new employees and six new partners, was sought as an enhancement both of the company's European presence and its existing services. A month earlier, Oliver Wyman acquired research and consulting firm Celent, which became a research unit in its financial services practice. In January 2008, it purchased Harbour, whose closely followed "Harbour Reports" are to the automotive business-to-business space what the JD Power survey is to the business-to-consumer space.

The prior year, in April 2007, the firm brought on Texas-based CAVOK International, which specializes in airframe maintenance solutions and air carrier certification support, and strengthens Oliver Wyman's offerings to the aviation, aerospace and defense industries.

Putting pen to paper

The firm keeps a high profile in the business world through the release of studies and reports, and the publication of articles, periodicals and books. Its annual report, "State of the Financial Services Industry," maps out key industry trends and developments, as assembled from its qualitative insights and analysis. The 2008 report described the economic outlook as "challenging," with financial services firms facing a "toxic mix" of high-risk/low-return economies and ongoing distractions. In 2008, Oliver Wyman also published the inaugural issue of an annual state of the industry report for communications, media and technology. The report analyzed shareholder performance index rankings of the 450 largest public companies in the sector, and determined the global market's worth as \$8.2 trillion.

Oliver Wyman consultants are credited with a number of books on business issues. Adrian Slywotzky, a company partner, wrote 2007's *The Upside: The 7 Strategies for Turning Big Threats into Growth Breakthroughs*, in which he knocks the conventional wisdom that high returns require exposure to major risks. Slywotzky was named one of the Top 25 Consultants in 2008 by *Consulting* magazine, the third year he has received this honor. In a group effort, David Nadler, Beverly Behan and Mark Nadler collaborated on 2006's *Building Better Boards—A Blueprint for Effective Governance*, a practical guide for convincing a corporate board to work together.

The firm's own publication, *Oliver Wyman Journal*, is available in print and electronically, and features articles written by partners about both past client engagements and industry insights. A recent issue looked at the coming burden of retiring baby boomers, R&D in the automobile industry and the early adoption of new technology. Oliver Wyman consultants often appear in the bylines in external business publications and trade journals, as well, and are frequently quoted as experts in the business press.

GETTING HIRED

To the top

Insiders say that when it comes to recruiting, Oliver Wyman targets “the usual suspects” at both the undergraduate and graduate levels—including Penn, Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Northwestern, UVA and Dartmouth, as well as Cornell, Toronto, Waterloo, Queens, McGill, Ivey and Columbia. Although the firm focuses its core recruiting on top universities across the world, sources tell us “students from other universities are encouraged to apply, as the firm has a flexible, year-round recruiting policy.” And “even though we have feeder schools, we will happily take smart people from other universities,” a consultant adds. “We just can't get to all of them.”

Up the intensity

Hiring is a “pretty intense process” that consists of at least two rounds of interviews. Campus candidates will start with an interview—including one case—on campus, before moving on to an in-office round within the general management consulting track, or a Super Saturday within the financial services management consulting track. Generally speaking, subsequent rounds will include at least “one case and one fit interview,” though some sources say the final round involves “four interviews, two cases and two fit,” whereas others report five. “A math test is sometimes included,” tips a consultant.

While there are “no brainteasers,” Oliver Wyman's case questions “tend to be more quantitative and analytical than other firms'.” During the interview rounds, candidates should “expect to be interviewed by both young people and very senior people.” A staffer notes that “the most senior members of the firm interview the new consultant. The CEO gave me a case interview!”

When all the questions have been asked, respondents say Oliver Wyman doesn't leave candidates hanging. According to those who have been through the process, decisions are generally made very quickly following the final round of interviews.

Quantitative Qs

So what kinds of questions might come up in those quant-oriented case interviews? Insiders recall being given problems like, “Estimate the number of birds that crash into New York City buildings each year” and “Size the college credit card market.” Another candidate was asked, “The government taxes \$0.05 per gallon of gasoline sold—how many dollars in tax revenue on gas does the government collect per year from ground transportation?” Yet another was asked to do “quantitative modeling on FICO score distributions. No math is required, but it's helpful.”

“Market sizing is often a component of the case, but is not often a full case by itself,” a consultant says, and cases will usually include “typical questions about market entry, new product launches—i.e., build versus buy—and competitive response.” Regardless of the specific question, sources agree there will be “lots of follow-up questions on strategy.” The firm wants to get a good grasp on how candidates structure ambiguous problems, apply their analytical capabilities and communicate their ideas.

Worth doing

Those who interned at Oliver Wyman say it's a “very valuable” experience. “Interns are not treated differently than first-year consultants,” a respondent insists. It's the “best way to find out about the company, from travel to training to getting to know the team and the people in the office.” Another former intern calls the program “fantastic,” adding, “I really felt like I was part of the team, and not just locked up in a back room with a calculator and a flashlight.”

Besides enjoying the chance to “actually work on projects,” former interns say “the social activities were fun, too.” “Interim and final evaluations are performed,” which help interns set goals and give “a very accurate representation of what it’s really like to be a consultant at Oliver Wyman.” In the end, says a source, the internship “was a great experience, and is why I joined full time.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Smart cookies

At Oliver Wyman, there’s no “cookie-cutter approach to culture,” employees say, and everyone’s welcome. One consultant notes, “In my office, you’ll find former frat guys, computer programmers, cheerleaders and everything in between. Amid all this diversity, there’s a sense that everyone is very smart, but very level-headed.” Indeed, others call the firm “quasi-academic” yet “quirky,” with “very few egos” and a “laid-back, youth-driven” atmosphere. “I feel comfortable interacting with partners on a first-name basis,” says a newbie. “People throughout the firm are a fun, easygoing crowd, which makes working alongside them that much better.” A source in San Francisco agrees, saying, “These are folks I choose to hang out with after work, which says a lot, given the long hours that I may spend with them in the office.”

Even inside the office there’s plenty of socializing, with “happy hours every Friday.” Plus, adds a consultant, “Each of our official parties—bonus party, holiday party—is followed by an [informal] after-party.” Employees find these gatherings “a great opportunity to chat with other consultants who are usually traveling” during the workweek. Partners, too, “are very friendly and welcome your input,” but don’t “care about face time.”

One downside to firm culture at the moment, however, is “rapid growth,” which some say “has eroded the small-firm feel” and has made life “a little more anonymous, especially in large offices like New York.” “We are a rapidly growing firm, but we need to realize that this can affect the culture,” a source says. “Our firm needs to invest way more in infrastructure, because we are not a tiny shop any more. We need to support our consultants.”

Speedy promotions

“Fast advancement opportunities are probably Oliver Wyman’s best attribute,” says one source. Another claims it’s possible to go “from new hire to partner in as little as five or six years,” though the “average is seven years.” Still, those who want it “can move very quickly,” and a “career review process is conducted twice a year, so depending on performance, people could be promoted as often as every year to year-and-a-half.” “With this opportunity comes the reality that subpar performers will not last long,” an insider notes.

Consultants call the official promotion policy “grow or go.” “As long as people are showing that they are advancing their skills and continuing to evolve, they will not be asked to leave,” a senior associate says, and the “generally supportive environment gives people ample opportunity to grow.” A respondent from New York observes that advancement has “no artificial boundaries—you will rise as quickly as you are capable.” A source on the financial services track explains, “You’re a consultant until you make partner. Promotion in terms of responsibility and respect is very rapid as well—as quickly as a consultant is able to take it on.”

A good cause

Sources say it’s easy to put in “60-hour weeks when staffed and 50-hour weeks when working on an internal project”—though the high end can reach up to “80 hours a week” and the low end can get down to “20 hours a week,” depending on the nature of the assignment and beach time. Generally speaking, “on a project, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are intense work days,” whereas Thursdays are “more relaxed since we travel back to our home locations in the afternoon, and Fridays in the office are generally very relaxed and include an in-office happy hour at 5 p.m.” “We do work a lot,” an insider admits, “but when it comes down to actual hours, it is rarely more than 55, and always with cause.”

There are short- and longer-term projects at Oliver Wyman, but an average assignment lasts about “two to four months,” we’re told. For projects longer than six months, “you can discuss with the staffing department to decide whether to stay or be removed from your assignment,” a consultant explains.

It can be balanced

Respondents say the best work/life balance is achieved by those who speak up for their needs. “As with all things, it is what you make of it,” a source says. “If you allow the job to rule your life, it will. If you set boundaries, the firm will respect them.” A new father remarks, “We just had a little girl. I was able to manage the first few months very successfully, with the firm’s support.” For most, the biggest threat to balance is the need to be on the road. “Travel is the most burdensome issue to work/life balance,” a consultant notes, “more so than overall work hours.”

Staffers go on to say “work/life balance is taken very seriously at Oliver Wyman,” as evidenced by “monthly scorecards” that financial services employees use to rate their workloads. “Partners are penalized financially for low scores,” one contact explains, so as a result, “most partners and consultants are wary of overworking their teams.” Of course, some projects can “cause crunch periods,” but for most people “very relaxed hours when on the beach balance out any longer days put in during client work.” Adds one source, “Weekend work is rare and almost always compensated with free days off down the road.”

Get going

So how much travel is there? “Prepare to pack your bags!” says a source. “Many projects require four days per week of travel, with little room for compromise,” but the allure for many is the fact that the destinations include “major cities and international locations.” A “recent focus on international work” has opened up “many opportunities” for globe-trotting (and sightseeing); those who are staffed abroad boast that “weekends in Paris, Vienna or London are common.” Others say they value travel because it fits in with the firm’s hands-on philosophy. “Travel to client sites is an absolute necessity for the kind of high-impact work we do,” an insider professes. “The kind of useless work consultants get stereotyped with doesn’t happen here because we really understand our clients.”

But for others, travel is “the biggest downside to this job and firm.” “I believe the average consultant here travels seven to eight months out of the year,” estimates a source. Adds another, “It probably adds about 10 hours to your week just to travel back and forth.” The load can vary depending on the type of project, too. “I’m one of the lucky ones,” a consultant says. “I don’t like travel and I’ve managed to avoid it. I generally work on strategy projects, which require less travel, and the locations are only a short flight away.”

Jump in the pool

Benefits include a 401(k) with matching based on firm performance, “free snacks in the office,” “huge discounts on cell phones,” “travel budget for weekends” if you choose not to return to your home base, and “lots of hotel points and airline miles”—but the firm is “not perk-oriented, so we can keep costs down and provide solid bonuses.” A “FlexOW” program allows for a number of different work options, including sabbaticals, reduced workweeks and 10- or 11-month work years.” The firm also allows consultants “to work for up to six months at a nonprofit, while still paying them 40 percent of their consulting salary.” For new parents, “men get three weeks’ paternity leave, women get 12 weeks’ leave and many take additional unpaid leave.”

Most sources say they’re satisfied with their “very competitive” compensation, which includes a bonus structure that’s “very attractive, and in past years has ranged between 60 and 75 percent of base salary.” “Our bonus pools are designed as profit-sharing pools,” a financial services consultant explains. First-year hires “receive 25 percent guaranteed, or half the bonus pool for their first full year of work.” The pay bump for international assignments “is particularly generous.”

Room to grow

“We’ve grown so fast we’re now in three different office buildings,” a New York City-based staffer remarks. Even with a new overflow building, “space in New York is at a premium,” but sources say “the firm’s other offices are significantly more spacious, quiet and productive.” Another New Yorker compares the digs to a “post-dot-com warehouse,” and a recent hire describes the “rather nontraditional” seating policies. “The first-years tend to sit at the ‘zen zone’—a gigantic table in the middle of the office with Internet connections and phones—where they can chat and ask each other questions while doing their work. People who find this social environment distracting have quieter places to sit, but I always choose to sit at the zone because it keeps me engaged with my peers and makes working a lot more fun.”

A partner in Boston comments, “There is an adage around here: We would rather have art in our home, not in our office. The point is that we run a very lean operation when it comes to our office space.” As a result, most Oliver Wyman offices boast an “old-fashioned cubicle environment,” but that “means lower overhead and greater bonuses, so we are okay with this.”

Unofficial, but friendly

Regarding diversity, we’re told there are “many different passport holders” within Oliver Wyman’s walls, but sources complain that there’s “a noticeable lack of diversity in senior management.” “I think our standing as a very international firm attracts a lot of interesting people,” says one consultant, and that includes employees with “a wide range of backgrounds from all over the world.” However, as one manager puts it, “Do we have clear-cut minority recruiting? No, we do not.” “Smart, effective people are smart, effective people,” shrugs a source, who says this laid-back attitude extends to GLBT employees as well. “We have partners who are gay and staff who are gay. No one cares about that here.”

Female staffers say they’re “treated equally,” but one partner admits that women’s long-term standing at Oliver Wyman “hasn’t been an area of concentrated focus. We do well at entry level, but like many firms, we have a hard time holding on to our most talented women as they progress.” One solution, insiders say, would be more “formal mentoring programs.” “I personally wish I had more female role models,” a source asserts. “When you talk to other partners about this, they understand—they are very aware of this. As a junior consultant, it’s not like I feel intimidated or out of place, it would just be nice to have more female role models to look up to.”

Changing training

According to the firm, consultants in the general management consulting track begin their career with a two-week “toolkit” training session designed to develop core consulting skills in a case simulation environment. In addition, formal training sessions are held annually for experienced consultants. Beyond that, training is “mostly unofficial,” through an “apprenticeship model,” but that’s fine with sources who call this the “most valuable” method of learning. “Every new hire gets a buddy assigned to them to serve as a career advisor,” so on-the-job learning occurs daily. “Since people usually start traveling right away and we have flexible start dates, it makes training an entire new incoming class difficult,” explains a respondent. “Most of our training entails training by our job managers, as well as tutorials on Fridays when people are back in the office.”

The trend is shifting somewhat, however. “We are working on ways to improve the effectiveness of training without forcing a month-long training session like those at I-banks.” Some say this change is “for the better,” though there’s still a way to go. “Some more formal training is being added as the firm grows, but I don’t feel that it has reached a level of maturity yet,” concludes a source.

Stretch, stretch

Respondents give high marks to managers and client exposure opportunities. “There really is no hierarchy here,” says a consultant. Another raves, “The opportunity to meet with, present to and work with top clients is phenomenal and happens frequently. Supervisors are keen to share responsibility and give stretch opportunities to junior consultants.” “I think we give our consultants more client-facing responsibility than any other firm from day one,” a co-worker agrees. “Within a year of

starting, I was presenting in front of a CFO. On my last project, I had one-on-one meetings with the CEO of a Fortune 1000 company, something very few junior consultants ever do.” A veteran says it’s all about merit: “If you prove yourself, you get exposure to senior clients, regardless of your own seniority at the firm. It’s as simple as that.”

On your own

Community service and charitable activity happens “on an ad hoc and office-by-office basis,” according to a contact in Dallas. “The firm has recently created a policy around pro bono consulting,” another consultant chimes in. “Other community involvement is generally driven by the interest of individual employees.” Recent pro bono efforts have included work with “several microfinance projects,” and employees take it upon themselves to “take part in New York (and Boston) Cares, the breast cancer walk and other events.” “People are pretty involved in charity and volunteer work, but on their own time,” is how one insider puts it. “Compared to other firms, our community involvement is light.” The firm reports, however, that its guiding philosophy is not to endorse any particular charity, but to encourage staff to contribute based on their own interests.

Oliver Wyman also runs a fellowship program to benefit the nonprofit sector. Employees can choose to work for an organization for up to six months, while the firm pays a stipend equivalent to 40 percent of their salary. As an extension of that program, the firm announced a new alliance with a micro-lending organization, Kiva.org in May 2008, launching a formal Kiva externship program that will dedicate consulting staff to support Kiva’s expansion.

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

300 Madison Avenue, 24th Floor
 New York, NY 10017
 Phone: (646) 471-4000
 Fax: (813) 286-6000
www.pwc.com
www.pwc.tv

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

Network of member firms in 71 US cities

PRACTICE AREAS

Advisory

Crisis Management
 Internal Audit
 Performance Improvement
 Transactions

Assurance

Tax

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Global CEO: Samuel A. DiPiazza Jr.
US Advisory Head: Juan A. Pujadas
2008 Employees: 31,600 +
2007 Employees: 30,000 +
2007 Revenue: \$7.5 billion
2006 Revenue: \$6.9 billion

*Employee and revenue figures are for the US practice only

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#8 – Financial Consulting
 #10 – Operational Consulting

Quality of Life

#12 – Formal Training
 #13 (Tie) – Hours in the Office
 #13 – Offices
 #14 – Work/Life Balance
 #16 (Tie) – Relationships with Supervisors

Diversity

#9 – Diversity for Women
 #13 – Best Firms for Diversity
 #20 – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- Exposure to executive-level clients
- “Commitment to work/life balance”
- Ability to leverage the firm’s vast resources
- The firm is “proactive rather than reactive”

DOWNERS

- “Getting staffed on projects is in many ways your own responsibility”
- “Uncertainty that results from slow work cycles”
- Opportunities and promotion standards differ from office to office
- “Everything is always subject to change”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Follow the careers link at www.pwc.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Re-emerging”
- “Plain vanilla”
- “Good for young people to develop”
- “Stodgy, slow”

THE SCOOP

Separation anxiety

Like the other Big Four accounting firms, PricewaterhouseCoopers has historically offered audit, tax and consulting services. While audit and assurance was always its biggest business, PwC's consulting unit was consistently a strong contributor to firm revenue—especially in the 1990s, when multinational corporate clients turned to PwC consultants for help implementing enterprise resource planning solutions. And PwC has never suffered from a shortage of clients: Its member firms serve customers in 26 industries and audit some of the world's largest corporations.

In the late 1990s, PwC—again, like other major accounting/professional services firms—came under pressure from the Securities and Exchange Commission to separate its consulting and accounting work to avoid conflicts of interest. When accounting firms began selling their consulting arms, most industry experts assumed PwC would have little trouble divesting its robust practice. Indeed, PwC began talks with Hewlett-Packard, suggesting a \$17 billion sale, but negotiations broke down in 2000 and were never resumed. In October 2002, however, the firm sold its consulting practice to IBM for approximately \$3.5 billion. At the time of the deal, PwC signed a five-year noncompete agreement with its former unit.

The IT option

The PwC-IBM noncompete agreement kept PwC from working in the fields of IT consulting and systems integration, but allowed it to continue developing management consulting services. When the noncompete clause ended in late 2007, however, PwC's consulting options were wide open. Since the systems integration market has become dominated by tech-oriented shops like Wipro, Infosys and (naturally) IBM, some analysts predict that PwC will rebuild its IT consulting around business-based concerns like strategy, vendor selection validation and verification.

Currently, PwC's advisory services include crisis management, internal audit, performance improvement and transaction services. It also fields two specialty actuarial departments: actuarial and insurance management solutions, which provides consulting services to the insurance industry from 10 offices throughout the United States, and human resource services, which focuses mainly on the pension industry. There's also a dedicated federal government group, the Washington federal practice, which includes 2,000 professionals in the capital.

One firm, many members

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP is the U.S. member firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers, a global network of independent member firms. Today, PwC member firms boast over 146,000 employees in 150 countries worldwide. This international powerhouse was created in 1998 by the merger of Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand, two accounting and professional services firms that date back to the 1800s. Both Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand started in London, and both grew around the globe organically and through mergers and acquisitions.

In North America, PwC LLP is headquartered in New York and includes almost 32,000 employees in 85 offices. To the north, the Canadian member firm has 5,200 employees in 24 offices across the country.

Consulting holds its own

In fiscal year 2007, the U.S. member firm reported revenue of \$7.5 billion. The assurance business contributed more than half of that total—\$4.4 billion—and tax came in second with \$2.1 billion. Advisory and consulting services brought in about \$1 billion. According to the firm, advisory revenue was driven by merger and acquisition activity in several sectors, the need for consulting services related to globalization and multinational business activity, and ongoing demand for risk management, compliance and controls consulting.

From a global PwC perspective, aggregate advisory revenue from all member firms was up 14.6 percent to \$5.7 billion in 2007, thanks to a strong flow of M&A advisory assignments, increased demand for performance improvement consulting and a more tightly integrated global market strategy. The global firm's revenue was \$25.1 billion, up from \$21.9 billion in fiscal year 2006; the North American region saw revenue climb 7.8 percent.

Although PwC's member firms serve clients in over two dozen industries, its recent revenue leaders have been clients in the automotive, investment management, pharmaceutical, banking and capital markets sectors.

Nothing but a number

Two PwC consultants were named to *Consulting* magazine's 2008 30 Under Thirty list. Manager Chris Houchin, 28, was cited for his work on a team that saved between 500 and 1,000 jobs at the National Institutes for Health. A member of the Washington federal practice, Houchin currently works with the Department of Defense—a marquee account that he says “we’re really starting to get traction in.”

Adam Jones, 26, a senior associate in PwC's Florida-based hospitality and leisure industry group, received recognition for his role in developing sports stadiums for professional and collegiate teams. One of his latest assignments? Helping the city of Las Vegas analyze options for adding pro sports to its bustling entertainment industry.

Eye on the markets

In March 2008 PwC consultants released a wide-ranging forecast of M&A activity in the U.S. media industry. The annual report suggested that deal volume will increase in 2008—despite the credit crunch and recession fears that may dampen private equity investments. That's thanks in part to the ongoing convergence of media, technology and communications platforms, which will lead to more strategic deal-making, PwC discovered. And with a weak American dollar, PwC reported that more European buyers will show an interest in purchasing U.S. media properties.

The following month, PwC's transaction services advisory group released another highly anticipated study: the U.S. IPO Watch. This survey of all initial public offerings listed on American exchanges, including domestic and foreign companies, showed that 2007 IPO activity reached a peak not seen since 2000. The 296 IPOs recorded in 2007 resulted in \$65.1 billion in proceeds, up from 236 offerings worth \$49.9 billion in 2006. Surprisingly, PwC found that problems in the credit markets didn't slow IPO activity in the second half of 2007—in fact, fourth quarter 2007 saw 101 IPOs, making it the busiest quarter for initial public offerings in the last eight years. But that's changing: According to Scott Gehsmann, a partner in PwC's transaction services group, 2008 got off to a slow start. “Volatility in the equity markets is challenging deal execution,” Gehsmann said when the study was released. However, “During 2008, both the debt and equity markets will be pursuing greater stability, which should fuel IPO activity.”

Helping hospitals grow

When the chief executive of Chicago's Loyola University Health System unveiled a \$1 billion plan to expand the university's teaching, research and clinical programs, he turned to PwC health care consultants for assistance. The plan, set to be approved by Loyola leaders in June 2008, would build the university's network of suburban medical care sites, convert its main hospital from a shared-room layout to private rooms and build a \$100 million research facility. Dr. David Chin, a partner in PwC's health care advisory practice, noted that other Chicagoland hospitals have focused their expansions in the city itself, as well as in the booming northern suburbs. That leaves Loyola plenty of opportunities to the south and west of Chicago during the 10 years of its new strategic plan.

GETTING HIRED

Looking for one of their own kind

Hiring at PwC is focused on fit. The interviews, one insider says, are “mostly behavioral and do not involve cases.” A recent hire gives an extensive breakdown of the process: “From a college student’s perspective, the hiring process consists of two rounds of interviews. The first one is the on-campus interviews, and the candidate interviews with three people (one senior, one manager, one partner/director). The questions asked are behavioral in nature. For example, ‘What did you do in a situation when you had to deal with a difficult person? How do you prioritize between family/friends, school and work?’ If a candidate passes the first round of interviews, he is invited to the in-house interview. This is where the candidate comes in to the office and interviews with three additional people. The in-house interview also consists of a firm tour, a panel discussion and lunch. From there, the interviewers would debrief and discuss the candidates they felt fit with the firm. The candidates would then be contacted if they have been given an offer.” A source adds, “Interviews generally involve a case study, and the evaluator will always be trying to determine if you stand out as a problem solver.”

An associate in Chicago characterizes the process as “relatively laid-back,” believing that “each interviewer focuses on what he/she feels is important.” A West Coast-based staffer remarks, “Our firm looks for confident people who display modesty and ease when interacting with others.” Want a bit of insider advice? “Be enthusiastic, learn about the position for which you are applying and be prepared to ask the interviewer a couple of pointed questions.” We’re told that PwC recruits “at nearly all regional and national business and accounting schools.”

Room for youngsters

The company’s internship program gets high marks from participants. One source describes it as “an amazing experience that sealed the deal for me,” adding, “I was given so many opportunities to learn project management and to interact with executive-level clientele.” A colleague points to the inherent advantage in being an intern: “It’s definitely an advantage to have a summer internship. Not only do you get to experience what a first-year associate would experience, but you also have the opportunity to bond with your start class. If you receive an offer for a full-time position, come next year when you actually start, nothing will be new or foreign to you.” If that’s not enough, an associate notes, “You also have the opportunity to go to Disney World at the end of your internship for leadership training.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Noses to the grindstone

PwC’s culture is largely centered around hard work. As one insider explains it, “The firm’s corporate culture is definitely different from the other Big Four firms. The people here are intelligent and they work hard. But at the same time, they know when to lay back and have fun. Everyone is friendly and they make you feel welcome.” Others label their colleagues as “very professional and hardworking,” and “highly performance-motivated.” There is a sense of camaraderie, however. An insider in Los Angeles explains, “Teamwork is not an option, but a way of life at PwC. Every staff member has a buddy (a peer to help guide them and answer questions), a coach (one level more senior to help you plan goals and plan career strategy) and a relationship partner to help ensure all firm-related questions are being answered and strategies are clear.” This sense of unity can extend outside of work as well—as an associate reports, “The practice hosts many social hours and other events to let employees connect at a more personal level outside of work.”

Ebb and flow

Most employees estimate they work between 40 to 50 hours a week, but maintaining work/life balance is not always smooth sailing. Employees stress the importance of staying flexible. One senior associate believes the balance “is more dependent on an individual’s current project, deadlines (often imposed by third parties) and the direct leadership of the team. Therefore, sometimes work/life quality is superb, while at other times it is sacrificed for the success of the project and needs of our clients.” Another source finds that “the firm is very open to when we need personal time, however this is a client-driven business with deadlines, so certain sacrifices need to be made.” Fortunately, the company recognizes the necessity of time away from work. According to a consultant, “I never feel intimidated or am made to feel guilty when I have to tell my manager that I am taking time off to visit friends or family.”

Travel demands follow similar patterns. One respondent attests, “Although some projects are in other cities, requiring staff to travel every week for extended periods of time, other projects are local, which means very little travel while on that project. Almost always, travel is Monday through Thursday, and Fridays are spent working from the office or at home.” An associate notes that travel “can vary greatly depending on your functional and industry expertise.” We’re told PwC does not flagrantly deploy staff to far-off places week after week and, in fact, there is a “large initiative to keep folks local.” “The firm has invested in technology to enable work to occur remotely and meetings to occur in multiple places,” a senior associate explains. One consultant relates his experience: “I have been on local projects since joining the firm, and so I have been able to come home after each work day. I know I will eventually have to travel, but the firm is great about minimizing travel from coast to coast as much as possible. Again, this is for client as well as staff well-being.”

Count your benefits

PwC provides a tidy benefits package for employees, which includes family leave, child care services, tuition reimbursement and health insurance. Respondents share some additional perks: “When you start with PwC, you are given a new laptop. Generally, these laptops are updated about every two to three years. The firm also reimburses you for mileage and pays for cell phone plans used for business purposes. The firm has supplies galore!” Another source recalls that, with the arrival of parenthood came “abundant gift baskets, flowers and gifts from the firm.” A senior associate appreciates that there are “corporate discounts at numerous electronic, cell phone and clothing stores.”

On the more sensitive side of benefits—monetary compensation—insiders give PwC middling marks, though that doesn’t seem to sour them on the firm overall. An associate consultant reports, “I have heard that our competitors pay more at the associate level, but I have not looked into this in detail. If I was not satisfied with the culture, I may be disappointed in my compensation.” Aside from basic pay, the firm “offers a 401(k) with a 25 percent match on the first 6 percent.” It also offers the Retirement Wealth Builder Plan (RWBP), which is funded completely by PwC. Firm contributions to this plan are based on job level and years of service, in some cases. A contact mentions the chance for cash bonuses, “given for good work on a project.” An advisory associate goes into it further: “Occasionally, partners have the discretion to give spot bonuses to individuals who are deemed worthy. I have seen these bonuses given for individuals who worked excessive hours for a period of time, who traveled extensively or who significantly contributed to a large project.”

A team mentality across the ranks

Staff also enjoy open access to superior officers in the firm. An insider says, “I have built relationships with directors and vice presidents during my first year as an associate. Although rank is important to outline roles, we view each other as a team, and our team meetings are a pretty even playing field. Everyone contributes and everyone is free to question the opinion of another, if need be.” An associate echoes the sentiment: “We are treated as part of the team at all times, rather than simply novice consultants.”

Time with clients is also available, although in one associate’s view, “there definitely exists a seniority structure where you are not allowed to build stronger relations to the client than your senior.” Another associate tells a different story, though, insisting, “I frequently interact with C-suite client executives, and present findings directly to executive teams.” New hires aren’t

automatically thrown into executive meetings, however. “You have to earn the firm’s trust, but once that is established the opportunity for exposure is there.”

Staying sharp

PwC provides “a lot of training.” A source attests, “There is a good balance between the informal mentoring and on-the-job learning and actual classroom training. Each year all staff are sent to a weeklong ‘advisory university’ to participate in courses on various topics that will be beneficial, depending on your industry and focus. First-year hires get at least two weeks of training before starting on an engagement.” An associate believes the “most useful” training “will obviously be picked up on the job.” Either way, it seems to work. “I have learned a lot,” declares an advisory associate.

Grip the ladder

The promotion track at PwC is well defined. Says one respondent, “There is a wide array of promotions and advancements. The firm clearly defines the skills needed and then you are assessed based upon your accomplishments compared to your peers.” As far as time with the firm goes, an insider states, “The first promotion usually occurs within three years.” A senior associate agrees, explaining that it takes “generally two to three years to move from associate to senior, and three to four years from senior to manager.” However, time alone does not automatically propel you through the ranks. A source notes, “When a person achieves the responsibilities of his/her level, that person is ready to be evaluated for promotion. Many top performers are promoted their first year. Those who don’t meet their goals year after year will be out.”

The gang’s all here

Diversity is a strong point at PwC. A senior associate from Los Angeles observes, “PwC has been rewarded for being very receptive to women in the workplace, and that is obvious in the workplace. I would estimate that the ratio of employees is almost 50/50 women to men, and that includes management.” With regard to minorities, an insider says, “The firm does an excellent job of seeking out minorities and has a strong diversity policy.” Another says of diversity initiatives, “From my perspective, everything that can be done is being done.”

Toward a better world

PwC acknowledges its corporate responsibility, sponsoring charity events and encouraging employees to volunteer. According to a source in Boston, “The firm does a lot in the community. I have been involved with a lot of events, such as volunteering at the YMCA and participating in a cancer research fund raiser.” Another insider comments, “There is a one-day firmwide shutdown for community service each summer, and PwC formally promotes many charitable causes, such as United Way, local charities, homelessness campaigns, etc.” An associate from Dallas finds that “these opportunities are not pushed on us, but for those who are interested, the firm is totally supportive. I often receive e-mails with information on how to get involved.”

L.E.K. Consulting

28 State Street, 16th Floor
 Boston, MA 02109
 Phone: (617) 951-9500
 Fax: (617) 951-9392
www.lek.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (US HQ)
London (Worldwide HQ)
 20 offices in 13 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Finance
 Marketing & Sales
 Operations
 Organization
 Strategy
 Transaction Services

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Co-Founder & Chairman: Iain Evans
2008 Employees: 850 +
2007 Employees: 700 +

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#9 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting

Quality of Life

#10 – Travel Requirements
 #16 – Formal Training
 #19 – Compensation

UPPERS

- Weekend work is not the norm
- "Staying in the office as opposed to traveling gives you a chance to hang out with nonteam-members"
- "Coming out of B-school, you are two years ahead of where you'd be at rival firms"
- No need for BlackBerries after working hours

DOWNERS

- "Most cases are short, so it's hard to plan anything further than one to two weeks out"
- "Lack of transparency in terms of pipeline and HR/admin processes"
- "Lack of control over specific case allocations"
- Very few females in higher ranks, and very few minorities in general

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.lek.com/careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Good people, sell themselves well"
- "Cookie-cutter casework"
- "Great at private equity due diligence work"
- "Ridiculous hours"

THE SCOOP

Plan and execute

L.E.K. Consulting is a London-based strategy consulting firm that now has hands around the world. With over 850 employees, the company maintains 20 offices in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. Its services span six categories: finance, marketing and sales, organization, operations, strategy and transaction services. Within the framework of these services, the company identifies its core capabilities as research, benchmarking, modeling, analysis and strategy development. Clients, ranging from small businesses to Fortune 500s, hail from a spectrum of industries.

Points on the board

With boosting shareholder value as the obvious endpoint of any public corporation's strategy, it makes sense that L.E.K. would have a few words on the subject. In collaboration with *The Wall Street Journal*, the firm presents the annual Shareholder Scoreboard, a by-the-numbers reckoning of the 1,000 largest U.S. companies by market capitalization—a/k/a., the WSJ 1000. The Scoreboard compares shareholder returns over one-, three-, five- and 10-year periods. Analysis and interpretation of these figures grant insight into the economy with, for instance, the returns for sectors like gambling and retail acting as a window into consumer confidence. The Scoreboard also reveals overall industry strength or weakness.

In a move no baseball player could duplicate, L.E.K. also manages to put points on the scoreboard without touching home plate—annual reviews based on the same concept as the Shareholder Scoreboard are drawn up for the Asia Pacific region in cooperation with *The National Business Review* of New Zealand, *The Australian* and *The Bangkok Post*.

Measure twice, cut once

Business strategy sometimes calls for defensive measures. No doubt this was the aim of the Motion Picture Association of America in 2005 when it commissioned an L.E.K. study to quantify the effect of film piracy on the industry. The results of the study were dramatic, indicating a worldwide loss of \$6.1 billion on the year, a teeth-grindingly large sum for the MPAA, which had believed the number to be only \$3.5 billion. These high-profile results were picked up by many major publications, including *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times*, as well as foreign newspapers.

L.E.K.'s research concluded that college students, primarily those in the U.S., Korea and Hungary, accounted for a whopping 44 percent of film piracy. For those who recall the Recording Industry Association of America's crusade several years earlier against illegal music downloads—the vast majority by teenagers—this result may be unsurprising. It is, however, wrong: In January 2008, L.E.K. admitted that human error had distorted the numbers, triple-inflating the mere 15 percent role of college students in global piracy. The study was revised for 2007.

Landing on the green

L.E.K. even has a strategy for the earth. In December 2007, L.E.K. announced a plan to become carbon neutral across its global network of offices—making it the first major consultancy to assume such an undertaking.

The company has estimated its annual carbon footprint to be approximately 7,000 tons of carbon dioxide. Its initial goal is a 20 percent reduction in this footprint over the next three years through responsible use of energy in its buildings, increased use of recycled and recyclable office consumables, and selection of greener modes of transportation. L.E.K. will also offer carbon reduction consulting services to clients.

Royally recognized

In April 2007, L.E.K. won the Queen's Award for Enterprise in the category of international trade. The Queen's Awards are given by the British monarch each year in recognition of business performance, based on the advisement of the prime minister and an

advisory committee that includes representatives of government, industry and commerce, and trade unions. The international trade category focuses on those companies that have shown growth in overseas earnings. L.E.K. won the honor based on the strength of its 50 percent export revenue growth over the last three years, particularly as a result of its penetration of the U.S. market.

GETTING HIRED

Finding the right fit

The hiring process at L.E.K. is “fairly grueling,” with “multiple rounds of interviews” and “difficult questions.” The firm does a great deal of “on-campus recruiting” at “top-level undergraduate, graduate and business schools.” Beyond that, hiring is done largely “through referrals.” We’re told that “interviews are both case-based and fit-based, and naturally trend toward industries in which L.E.K. has a strong emphasis.” One recent hire states, “There is no trying to trip people up or anything like that, though. The questions are challenging, but the attitude in the interview is that we want the interviewee to succeed and to show us what he is capable of, so it is a very positive and encouraging environment.”

A source recalls, “I had two interviews within my first round with associates that had been in the firm two to three years. The second round was three 30-minute interviews with a manager and two partners. In each round, there tended to be a quantitative question (like all consulting interviews) and a strategy question (What would you look at to determine why sales are going down?).” She adds that “everyone is always assessing fit with the firm, with regard to your personality.”

The real deal

Summer internships are common at L.E.K., and current staffers who started out as interns describe their experiences as “excellent,” “fantastic” and “very hands-on.” A recent hire says that, as an MBA-holding intern, he was “immediately put on a case, tasked with managing a team and filling the role of a full-time consultant.” He adds, “I was responsible for outlining, crafting and managing the team responsible for the entire deliverable,” noting, “The firm does a great job of exposing summers to what life is really like for a full-timer.” Another newbie echoes, “The summer consultant experience is very representative of the true workload. There is no ‘soft’ internship. People will see the real deal and know what it is like to work at L.E.K.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Coastal differences

Insiders at L.E.K. all agree that the firm is full of “great people.” “They are the type of people you really want to work with during the day and you really want to hang out with after work,” describes one associate. Another adds, “Working at L.E.K. is like going to work every day with all the people you wish you went to college with.”

That being said, we’re also told that firm culture “varies from office to office,” and the “West Coast has a very different feel compared to the East Coast.” On the East Coast, sources tend to focus on words like “hardworking” and “bright” to describe their colleagues. A Boston-based associate consultant reports that, in his view, the firm has a “positive and intense culture,” made up of “dynamic and intellectual” staffers who “provide a fast-driven and goal-oriented environment.” A consultant in the same location adds that “people in the office are focused and hardworking,” as well as “outgoing, thoughtful and impressive.” East Coasters aren’t all work and no play, but socializing seems to be secondary. As one respondent puts it, “Although the culture is focused on delivering for the client, people are still very social.” Another points out that “people work hard, but come Friday afternoon, everyone is ready to head across the street and celebrate the end of the workweek together.”

The West Coast offices are reportedly more “collegial” and “laid-back.” We’re told that life is “fun in the LA office,” where “most employees are very young.” In San Francisco, the “culture is very friendly and family-like,” and an associate reports,

“Everyone knows everyone personally, and hangs out together outside of office gatherings.” The Chicago office, falling somewhere in the middle, is “quite collegial and laid-back.” “Everyone is focused and intelligent and dedicated, of course,” remarks a senior associate consultant, “but not to the point of being unpleasant to work with.”

Lots of late nights

Still, whatever the descriptive terms they use in reference to L.E.K.’s atmosphere, staffers on both coasts say the hours are long, and achieving a work/life balance can be tough. Workweeks average around 60 to 70 hours, although they can vary between 50 and 80, depending on the case. Still, “no one works late to look good or to put in the hours,” and according to one new hire, “During late nights there is definitely a ‘we’re all in this together’ mentality.” Additionally, the company notes that it reviews staff hours on a weekly basis, and comp days are awarded if an employee’s time working is consistently over a certain threshold. Cases tend to be short and intense, ranging from “two weeks to 12 weeks”—“three-month projects are considered very long at L.E.K.” “In Boston,” an engagement manager explains, “staffing has routinely run in excess of 100 percent utilization (with cases overlapping and individuals double-staffed.)”

Set your boundaries

Most say the onus is on the consultant to plan ahead in order to maintain some semblance of balance. A junior source explains, “As a consultant, you must be diligent about looking forward to deliverables and managing upward to ensure that you’re getting resources and time on VP calendars so that you can manage work/life balance for both you and your associates.” Others add that supervisors are “pretty understanding” about commitments “if you let them know in advance.” “It is mostly a matter of setting and communicating your boundaries,” says one manager. A colleague concurs: “If you don’t push back, people will continually ask for more. However, when you do push back, people respect your outside life.”

Weekends are BlackBerry-free

Many respondents feel “there is a strong effort to keep weekends sacred,” but that can make things harder during the week, since “sometimes the long hours are put in to avoid weekend work.” As one associate puts it, “Your weekends are yours, but your week belongs to L.E.K.” Most think this is the best compromise; as one source states, “I would rather work late on Wednesday and have Saturday off than vice versa.”

A consultant in Boston reports that “the work/life balance at L.E.K. has improved markedly since I started here four years ago,” noting, “There is a survey that goes out twice a year, and several new initiatives and incentives have come about as a direct result.” In particular, there is a “unique comp time policy, where we get a day off if we work three 65-hour-plus weeks in a row or more than 80 hours in one week.” “It’s amazing,” raves an associate. “The nice thing about our firm is that they allow you to go home without requiring you to bring your computer or have a BlackBerry. You generally know ahead of time when you’ll be there past working hours, or 6:30 p.m.”

Compensation’s a cut above

The above-average compensation at L.E.K. also helps make up for late nights. There are “performance bonuses in the spring and fall,” as well as profit sharing based on “worldwide firm performance” that can be as much as “15 to 20 percent of total salary.” Signing bonuses are also common for new hires coming directly from campus recruiting. And, climbing the career ladder comes with an added benefit: “two paid weeks off in between major promotions (i.e., associate to consultant, or consultant to manager).” One longtimer notes, “L.E.K. pays higher than other consulting firms the longer you stay.”

Beer cart Fridays

In other perks, the firm “offers the ability to swap to an international office for six months” (evidently “London and Australia are the most popular places to swap”), as well as “the ability to take a sabbatical once an employee has worked for two years.” L.E.K. also offers to pay for business school for its “top performers,” with a two-year commitment postgraduation.

On a lighter note, the firm holds “fantastic social events,” including “a weekend summer party and a extravagant holiday party.”

A San Francisco-based consultant explains, “Every office has a social budget that enables it to have work-sponsored events, organized by a social committee composed of all staff. In SF, we’ve done wine tasting in Sonoma, a ski weekend in Tahoe, poker nights and other assorted team-building activities.” Others mention “random award giveaways of plane tickets” and gifts at holidays, like a “Tiffany’s money clip.” There’s also “free food/drinks everywhere.” And in the Los Angeles office, since the firm is “an industry leader in media and entertainment consulting,” there’s a “full game room with Wii, PS2, Xbox, foosball, a fully-stocked fridge with drinks and fresh organic fruits, and multiple newspapers and magazines.” Meanwhile, an associate in Boston highlights a “beer cart that’s pushed around by partners at 5 p.m. every Friday (3 p.m. during summer hours).”

Sleep in your own bed, if you want to

Even better, there’s “not much travel at all” for staffers at L.E.K., so that “even if you put in a long day, you get to sleep in your own bed.” “Most trips are one- or two-day trips that occur every few weeks,” and while specifics “vary by case,” a consultant insists, “I’m confident that travel here is less than at other firms.” Explains a Boston-based associate consultant, “Traditionally, the L.E.K. business model has been different than many management consulting firms. We achieve most of our strategy work in the local office and only go on site for deliverables (i.e., final presentations or workshops).” And when travel does pop up, it doesn’t come as a surprise: An associate reports, “In my experience, I have been alerted ahead of time and given the option if I was being allocated to an on-site case.” Others agree that “associates are very often given the choice of opting in or out of the occasional travel-heavy case that comes our way.” Alternatively, “If you express interest in travel, the firm is pretty good about giving you those opportunities.”

Some staffers do warn that “L.E.K. is starting to take on more travel cases,” and there are certain situations that call for “Monday through Thursday travel for extended time periods.” Still, there’s no question that “travel is definitely the exception rather than the rule here.”

Spending quality time with supervisors

Sticking close to home means getting to know your supervisors well. A recent hire states, “Given the amount of time spent in the home office, you really get the ability to interact with your managers and partners and to develop strong working relationships with them. Additionally, the partners I have worked with have been very hands-on during cases,” and colleagues agree that they have a “very high level of interaction with partners.” We’re told that “associates interact with partners as much as consultants and managers,” and “if you have something to say, it will get heard.”

On the flip side, limited travel also means limited client interaction, at least for some. “As an associate after seven months, I have never gotten to interact with a client in person,” says one staffer. And another comments, “L.E.K. is very bad at letting pre-MBA people get any serious client contact, in my opinion.” MBA grads, however, hit the ground running: An engagement manager explains, “Consultants lead teams of three to five from their very first day out of business school, and often find themselves presenting directly to a firm’s CEO, CFO, etc.” Of course, experiences can vary—one associate happily reports, “In terms of client relationships, I can’t imagine that I could get any significantly greater exposure, from helping deliver client presentations and discussing models with senior-level client management, to leading client task forces or meetings when necessary.” And another echoes, “L.E.K.’s culture really promotes interaction with managers, partners and clients at an early level, which is great for client interaction skill development.”

Buddied up

There's also plenty of training to be had. Some of it is "very formal and well structured"—in particular, there is an official two-week training session for associates and associate consultants that includes a series of instructions followed by a one-week mock case, as well as "monthly official training for each level." An associate adds, "You are also assigned a career development coach who aids you on a more informal basis and who looks out for your development needs." "Finally," says another, "There is a mentor who is more of a 'buddy' and is available to answer any and all questions." But many respondents say that "most of the useful training is through on-the-job training." A Chicago-based consultant says there are "lots of opportunities to share knowledge and best practices with people on other projects."

A clear path up

Respondents say "one of the best parts of L.E.K. is its policy of quickly promoting strong performers." It's fairly "standard that after two years at a given level (associate, associate consultant, consultant) you're promoted to the next." However, it's worth noting, says one associate, that "some associates have been promoted to consultant without going back to school for an MBA, but this is a rare case." Next in line, "strong consultants are on track to be promoted to manager at the two-year mark," but otherwise "it's about two to three years from consultant to manager." A source comments, "Some consultants will not be promoted to manager due to lack of ability, but I think they are told this." She adds, "It is not an up-or-out culture. If you decide that you don't want the manager lifestyle, you can say so and stay as a consultant."

The glass ceiling

And it seems that female consultants generally tend to be so inclined. One female associate consultant notes that "the male/female ratio is fairly balanced at the associate role, however it quickly skews as you move up the ranks." Others concur that "there are few women high up in the company." An associate in San Francisco believes that "no female partner or manager has kids, and few are married." Still, most staffers indicate that there are "active efforts at recruiting and retaining women," and many say women "choose to leave" before climbing the ranks "for personal reasons (i.e., have a family)."

Similarly, although some staffers say there are "hardly any minorities" at the firm, one associate consultant comments, "I don't think that is a fault of L.E.K." She adds, "As a minority, I have never felt any prejudice or racism working here. So the firm ranks low in terms of numbers, but very high in terms of being fair without looking at race."

Going green

Insiders say L.E.K. offers "a plethora of community involvement opportunities," and there is a "a community service committee that organizes one event per quarter." Staffers get "no day off for service," although some funding may be available, according to the company. "We are involved in the Inspire (nonprofit consulting) program, and we have one of those cases running at all times," an associate explains. The firm also participates in "a yearly charity bike race called the Pan Mass Challenge," through which it has been known to raise "over \$80,000." Other philanthropic activities include a "holiday gift drive" and "urban city outreach," as well as volunteering at the Greater Boston Food Bank, local charter schools and Habitat for Humanity. Plus, a San Francisco-based source boasts, "We're the first strategy consulting firm that has become carbon neutral (as of January 1, 2008)."

Ernst & Young LLP

5 Times Square
New York, NY 10036
Phone: (212) 773-3000
Fax: (212) 773-6350
www.ey.com

PRACTICE AREAS

Assurance & Advisory Business Services
Tax
Transaction Advisory Services

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (US HQ)
London (Global HQ)
Locations in 138 countries and territories

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman & CEO: James S. Turley
Area Managing Partner, Americas: Steve Howe
2007 Revenue: \$9 billion (Americas)
2007 Revenue: \$21.1 billion (global)
2006 Revenue: \$18.4 billion (global)
2008 Employees: 40,635 (Americas)
2007 Employees: 38,000 (Americas)

RANKING RECAP**Practice Area**

#7 – Financial Consulting

UPPERS

- “Technical and technological resources”
- “Close-knit community”
- Power of choice—over teams, disciplines and locations

DOWNERS

- “Emphasis on sales versus service delivery”
- Cumbersome politics
- “Personal development standards still not in place”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Follow the Careers link at www.ey.com

**THE BUZZ**

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Resilient”
- “Accounting first, consulting second”
- “Well known regarding risk issues”
- “Very formal and hard to relate to”

THE SCOOP

Two men who never met

Scotsman Arthur Young left his homeland for the United States in 1890, determined to pursue a career in accounting. Assisted by his brother Stanley, Young opened Arthur Young & Company in Chicago. Around the same time, Cleveland native Alwin C. Ernst and his brother Theodore opened Ernst & Ernst, a small public accounting firm. Alwin Ernst was something of a pioneer: He was one of the first accountants to emphasize the fact that accounting information could be used to develop business and management strategy. In a similar vein, Young melded business advisory services with accounting at his firm.

But for all Ernst and Young had in common, they never spoke or met—in fact, they died within a few days of each other in 1948. Several years later, Ernst & Ernst merged with Brits Whinney, Murray & Co., adopting the name Ernst & Whinney. It was under this name that Ernst's firm merged with Young's in 1989, forming the Ernst & Young of today—a global entity made up of independent member firms in more than 140 countries.

Advisory meets accounting

Building on the principles established by its founders, Ernst & Young became a force to be reckoned with in the consulting world, investing heavily in that area of the business in the 1980s and 1990s. When regulatory concerns about audit firms' consulting services arose in the late 1990s, EY was the first major professional services entity to take action. In 2000, it severed ties with its advisory services, selling its consulting arm to French IT services firm Cap Gemini for \$11 billion. Initially, the unit was dubbed Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, but was later shortened to Capgemini.

These days, EY is back in the advisory game, with a special emphasis on risk management. It provides actuarial services, financial services risk management, business risk services, fraud investigation and dispute services, and technology and security risk advisory. The firm also provides business advisory services in three primary areas: finance, supply chain and operations, and customer management. Its transaction advisory services business includes mergers and acquisitions, divestitures and integration services, in addition to commercial, financial, real estate and tax due diligence.

Worldwide growth

For fiscal year 2007, EY reported global revenue of \$21.1 billion, up 15 percent from the previous year. The transaction advisory services unit showed the greatest growth, achieving a 29 percent revenue increase—the result of significantly increased demand from private equity clients, business in emerging markets and strong deal flow. The tax division was up 18 percent, driven mostly by activity in the Americas and Asia. Finally, assurance and advisory business services climbed 16 percent, mostly in the areas of assurance and risk advisory.

Of EY's seven geographic regions, the Americas showed the slowest growth in 2007, with a revenue increase of just 10 percent over 2006. The Far East was the global growth leader for the year, up 27 percent, followed by Northern Europe, the Middle East and Africa with 22 percent, and Japan with 21 percent.

Going electronic

Ernst & Young's fraud investigation and dispute services practice includes more than 1,000 professionals worldwide, and in 2008, its U.S. forensic technology and discovery services team was ranked among the top-10 providers of e-discovery services by the annual Socha-Gelbmann Electronic Discovery Survey. The annual independent study is considered a benchmark for the electronic discovery market.

Led by Eric Schwarz, the U.S. forensic technology and discovery services team provides e-discovery services to support litigation and fraud investigations in the U.S. and internationally; the business has been picking up as more and more information is stored electronically, changing the way lawyers and investigators handle evidence.

Americas award winners

In 2008, Ernst & Young LLP, the U.S. member firm, was named one of *Fortune*'s 100 Best Companies to Work For. It ranked No. 57 on the list, becoming the only Big Four firm that has made the ranking for 10 consecutive years. Perhaps related, the firm's 2007 internal survey reported that 94 percent of its employees consider themselves proud to work at EY. Meanwhile, the Canadian member firm was named one of the Best Workplaces in Canada for 2008 by the Great Place to Work Institute, its third year on the list. Emphasizing its inclusive nature, EY was also recognized in 2008 as one of the Top 50 Companies for Diversity by *DiversityInc* magazine. The publication lauded the firm's efforts to support career development, workforce planning, communication and leadership accountability for minority professionals, as well as a supplier diversity program. EY was also honored as a top-10 company for Asian Americans, and a top-10 company for GLBT employees.

According to the firm, its award-winning workplaces are the result of an initiative launched in the mid-1990s. Called People First, the program coordinates global efforts to improve diversity, provide better support for working parents and increase flexible work options.

Chief of green

Environmental sustainability has become an issue for some of EY's advisory clients, but in 2008, the firm went from consulting on environmental assurance and risk management to taking environmental action in its own offices. It created a new internal position, Americas director of environmental sustainability, focused on developing and implementing sound environmental practices in Ernst & Young locations throughout the Americas.

The job went to Leisha John, a 24-year EY veteran who'd previously served as CEO of the firm's global shared services center in India. Before her overseas assignment, John had been the director of strategy and operational excellence for the U.S. tax compliance group. In her new role, John reports directly to Americas CFO Kathy Pawlus. According to the firm, its own consulting staff will support John's efforts to minimize EY's carbon footprint.

Who's managing the risk?

In North America, Ernst & Young serves clients in more than a dozen industries, including asset management, automotive, banking and capital markets, biotechnology, consumer products, insurance, media and entertainment, mining and metals, oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, power and utilities, real estate (including construction, hospitality and leisure), technology and telecommunications.

The insurance advisory services practice issues an annual insurance risk leadership study, which surveys senior executives in the insurance industry to gauge trends and concerns. The 2008 edition revealed some startling news: Fewer than half the chief risk officers surveyed said their office—or an enterprise risk management committee—had specific authority over key decisions like investment strategy, product design and pricing, financial planning or strategic planning. Even more surprising, EY found that only half of CROs surveyed said their role currently includes monitoring equity, interest rates, credit or operational risk.

IFRS expertise

Canada is scheduled to switch from GAAP (general accepted accounting principles) to IFRS (international financial reporting standards) in January 2011, and EY is rapidly carving out a consulting niche related to the conversion. The change will have an impact on every aspect of preparing, auditing and using financial statements for Canada's 4,500 public companies—and they're all supposed to have transition plans in place by the end of 2008.

However, a study conducted by EY, in partnership with the Canadian Financial Executives Research Foundation, found that most Canadian companies were unprepared for the conversion. In fact, the majority of Canada's senior finance executives were not even aware of the differences between IFRS and Canadian GAAP. Even fewer had begun strategizing with their audit committees, let alone calculating the costs of the conversion or determining if their IT systems were up to the task—bad news for Canadian public companies, perhaps, but good news for EY consultants.

GETTING HIRED

Taking a long look

The interview process at EY is lengthy, but not high pressure, insiders tell us. A consultant in New York recalls, “I had two rounds of interviews. The first round was with a manager. He asked me to describe the part-time jobs I had during college and what my responsibilities were. Additionally, he asked me to discuss why I chose Ernst & Young. During the second round of interviews, I was interviewed by five individuals: two partners, one senior manager and two managers. The managers primarily told me about the practice and just asked me about my interests based on my resume. The partners and senior manager asked me more technical questions, primarily focusing on what was on my resume. They asked me about what I learned on my prior positions and to give examples of my problem-solving abilities.”

Another source indicates that the “interviews are all fit/behavioral interviews.” He also recommends that candidates “come with good questions for the interviewers.” A consultant corroborates that bit of advice, saying, “I eventually found out that the interviewers really like it when the candidates ask intelligent questions because it gives them a sense of how prepared and interested the candidate is in the particular position he is applying for.” A more recent hire remarks, “The interview seemed more like a conversation than me being drilled and evaluated. Just be prepared to talk about your resume and your teamwork experience.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Adapting as they go

The EY culture is, to some degree, split between the consulting practice and the accounting practice. One source explains, “The corporate culture is much more relaxed than that of competitors, but projects also tend to be more biased toward the public sector and/or internal audit-related services. A lot of friendly, helpful and nonpretentious colleagues are around the corridors, although the advisory business sometimes feels a bit oppressed by the auditors (I assume that is the case in all Big Four houses).” A colleague remarks, “Overall, the senior management sets a good tone. However, the culture really depends on the group one works in. Consulting/advisory service lines tend to be more aggressive than in audit practice. But the audit practice tends to be more political.” A manager observes “a lot of politics and tons of favoritism. The banking team of audit for financial services has the most politics. Asset management seems to have less of that. Advisory practice tends to be a little better since they are smaller than audit teams.”

To navigate successfully through the large firm, a senior source points out, it’s “so important to find a mentor that can pull you through your career—otherwise, you will be forgotten as one of many in the sea of employees.” For some, however, finding a niche is simple. An insider in Chicago praises the “very relaxed environment” and “awesome people,” claiming that “overall, it’s a great experience with multiple clients.”

Completing the task at hand

Maintaining a work/life balance at Ernst & Young can be a challenge, especially as deadlines creep up. A source reveals, “Upper management tries hard to enforce the People First culture of the company, but several employees end up working on projects with long hours. As a deadline approaches, workweeks can easily go up to 60 hours. However, on average, employees work from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.” A senior manager complains, “I have to work past midnight at home each night to avoid working more weekends. Work/life balance can really be lip service when client deadlines come up.” Another source agrees, “It is not unusual to see half the office on site on a Friday afternoon at 6 or 7 p.m. When project deadlines approach, that means you will work long days and 60- to 80-plus-hour workweeks.”

The firm does not ignore the basic need for balance, though. An insider attests, “They do work hard to correct the wrongs, and if they cannot fix the problem, they try to provide alternatives. For example, when the majority of firm personnel that were working on 404/Sarbanes Oxley work were so swamped with work, they had no way to take their paid time off. If the PTO was not taken within the fiscal year, only a certain percent would carry over to the next year. So the firm instituted a policy (temporary, but extended for the second year in a row) of allowing all personnel to have four-day weekends for Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day, in addition to the four-day weekends typically provided for Thanksgiving and Christmas.” A consultant in New York also points out, “There are some projects that require exceptional commitment (e.g., 100 hours a week, like I’ve done once), but you will always be asked by staffing personnel about your willingness to take on such projects. It’s great that staffing personnel always ask you specifically if there’s anything that you’re interested in, or if you have some limitations in terms of your work hours.”

Here, there, everywhere

Ernst & Young staffers are no strangers to travel. “Eighty percent of one’s time is spent traveling,” a source reports, explaining that “there is a 3-4-5, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. policy in place. This means traveling team members stay away from home only three nights a week, work on the client site four days a week and do work five days a week.” An insider in Chicago believes the travel is best when it’s done in short stints. “Normally, the business travel requirements are not a problem. It is the extended out-of-town engagements that wear on you, and take a toll on family life.”

Getting ahead

Promotion through the ranks at EY is a matter of course, so long as the effort is there. A source explains, “If you compare opportunities for advancement between EY and industry in general, there’s no comparison—EY offers so much more opportunity. Most people use EY as an escalator in their career. The only question is, how high do you ride the escalator before leaving for a cushy job in industry to coast into retirement? The defined career path has some ‘time at level’ expectation, but typically consensus from a person’s supervisors would start the promotion process.” A senior advisor feels similarly, noting that “the opportunities for advancement are great, overall. As a typical consulting practice, the policy is pretty much up or out. Those who do not meet the standards of the practice are usually given one year to catch up and are then let go. Those that maintain the standard are promoted to the next level.”

Spotlight on diversity

Ernst & Young also makes the grade when it comes to diversity. According to one source, “I would say that there is certainly a large spotlight internally on the firm’s efforts to recruit and retain women and minorities, and to extend the partnership to women and minorities. The firm also makes an effort to identify minority resources that are rising stars, in order to offer them work opportunities on large client engagements.” As a colleague points out, “EY prides itself on diversity,” although a manager claims, “I think the firm does try overall, but it doesn’t necessarily translate into individuals taking ownership to promote diversity in one’s workplace.”

222 West Adams Street
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: (312) 648-0111
www.atkearney.com

LOCATIONS

Chicago, IL (HQ)
Offices in 34 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Complexity Management
Enterprise Services Transformation
Global Business Policy Council
Operations
Procurement Solutions
Strategic Information Technology
Strategy
Sustainability

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Managing Officer & Chairman: Paul A. Laudicina
2008 Employees: 2,500
2007 Employees: 2,500
2007 Revenue: \$785 million
2006 Revenue: \$750 million

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#2 – Operational Consulting
#9 – Energy Consulting

Quality of Life

#15 – Compensation
#18 – Interaction with Clients

UPPERS

- “Evolving cultural rebirth after the buyout”
- Lots of international assignments, even for junior consultants
- Managers “take your personal interest into account” during staffing
- “Structured performance management and mentoring programs”

DOWNERS

- “Reputation in US is not as strong as in other parts of the world”
- “Unstructured management style, with many bosses”
- “Too much administrative burden placed on consultants”
- Not enough firm-sponsored social activities

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

See the careers link at www.atkearney.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “On a comeback”
- “Operational, ‘nonsexy’ consulting”
- “Nicest people”
- “Limited visibility”

THE SCOOP

Strategy from the second city

Chicago-based A.T. Kearney focuses on what it calls “CEO-agenda concerns,” including growth, operations excellence, merger integration, supply chain management and technology strategy. The firm serves every flavor of industry, and maintains offices in 34 countries across the Americas, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Australia.

The Kearney kernel was planted in 1926 by founder and eventual namesake (the firm did not adopt its current name until 1946) Andrew Thomas Kearney. It initially specialized in manufacturing and operations, and carried out business solely from Chicago. Office proliferation began in 1961 with the opening of a second U.S. branch, and was followed three years later with a first international office in Düsseldorf, Germany.

The value of self control

The firm’s lifeline was uniquely altered in 1995 when it was acquired by Electronic Data Systems Corp., or EDS, a publicly traded technology services company. The relationship between the two firms, though it lasted for 10 years, was strained for both financial and corporate/cultural reasons.

In early 2005, EDS appeared ready to talk turkey about a new arrangement, and discussions began about the possibility of a management buyout for A.T. Kearney. However, in June 2005, EDS abandoned this route and instead began negotiations with another consulting outfit—Monitor Group. Several months later, this deal, too, failed to reach fruition, leaving a management buyout as the tidiest, and perhaps last remaining, solution for the incompatible companies. In January 2006, funded collectively by over 170 officers from 26 nations, A.T. Kearney assumed ownership of itself, and was once again independent.

Take me to your council

One of the intricate moving parts within the larger machinery of A.T. Kearney is the Global Business Policy Council, an elite advisory group offered as a resource to corporate leaders. The GBPC follows the global business environment, attempting to identify shifts in economics, politics, technology and demographics before they happen. Access to the council is limited to select corporate leaders, who are given the opportunity to gather twice a year for symposia with the GBPC.

In addition, the council assists in the business of government, providing consulting services to governing entities worldwide in visioning, competitiveness, export and investment promotion, and national branding. GBPC insights are packaged as The FDI Confidence Index and regional FDI Confidence Audits, which analyze the drivers that influence foreign direct investment flows.

Up all night writing papers

Similar to the analytical products of the GBPC, A.T. Kearney releases a host of studies annually that track industry trends. A prime example is The Global Services Location Index, an evaluation and ranking of offshore services locations, weighing cost, labor quality and availability, safety and stability, and other factors. The March 2007 results crowned India and China as the top countries for outsourcing. Many nations not traditionally associated with outsourced functions are looking for a cut of the action, and in 2007, the firm added Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Uruguay, Morocco, Senegal, Mauritius, the Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the index. Another annual study, the Global Retail Development Index, ranks 30 emerging countries on the attractiveness of their retail market. Vietnam, India and Russia topped the list in 2008.

With a more domestic focus, A.T. Kearney’s corporate sustainability survey, conducted alongside the Institute for Supply Management, looked at 25 North American Fortune 500 companies, examining their sustainability initiatives and commitments, such as the promotion of economic development (profits and job creation), environmental stewardship (energy conservation and pollution reduction) and social well-being (labor standards and community impact). According to the results of the March 2007 report, titled “True and Profitable Sustainability Management,” A.T. Kearney found that while most firms surveyed recognize the

value of adopting sustainable practices—whether to strengthen their brand or to differentiate their products—still, most do not have internal organizational processes to promote sustainability management.

Emission mission

Choosing to practice sustainability as well as to judge it, the firm announced in September 2007 its plan to transition to a carbon neutral operating plan within two years. Initiatives to this end include a limit on internal travel, a shift of necessary travel from air to rail as feasible, a preference for services from carbon-efficient airlines, hotels and rental car companies, and an increase in the use of public transit. Like other consulting firms committed to environmental conservation, A.T. Kearney will also offer consulting on carbon reduction to clients.

GETTING HIRED

The five spot

Qualified applicants won't find many surprises in A.T. Kearney's hiring process: The firm has a consistent two-round scheme, insiders tell us, typically including "a total of five interviews" that cover "a combination of" cases and behavioral questions. Variations are certainly possible (some staffers recall having had six interviews, others say four), but these are the exception rather than the norm. In general, the first round consists of "two case interviews, or a case and a fit interview," and the "decision round" consists of "one case interview, one case prep and presentation, and one fit interview." All in all, sources say the process is "very rigorous" and "highly structured," and a manager adds that "genuine interest and cultural fit with the firm is very important."

No brainteasers here

For the presentation interview, we're told candidates are given one hour to work with a "more in-depth case (two pages of text describing the scenario)," and are asked to "prepare a mini-presentation for 20 minutes to senior leadership." A manager advises, "Don't expect brainteasers during your A.T. Kearney interview—most of our cases are real projects each consultant has worked on." Specifically, sources note that case questions might be along the lines of: "The world's largest confectionery manufacturer is struggling to make profits in BRIC countries—why?" "A paper manufacturer is thinking about reducing prices to increase sales. Should they?" "You are working for an office supply store (e.g., Office Max). You are working specifically on the furniture division, which is 20 percent of revenue. Sales have been increasing by 10 percent, but profits by only 2 percent. Why?" "What do you think of the latest price (\$6 billion) paid by MTC for the third mobile telecom license in Saudi Arabia? Do you think it's the right move for MTC?"

A.T. Kearney places a large emphasis on campus recruiting, with a focus on "top-tier MBA programs." A partner explains that there is a "national recruiting team of consultants at each level that interviews and makes offers for all candidates." For recruits, we're told that first-round interviews typically take place on campus, and that there may also be an additional "initial phone screen."

Just like real life

MBA students can get a good sense of the firm through its internship program, which former participants describe as "fantastic," "excellent," "absolutely fabulous" and "awesome." A.T. Kearney "does not sugarcoat its summer program," so interns get insight into the "real consulting world through a full project experience," "senior client interaction and exposure," and "great networking and training opportunities across North America" over the 10-week period. A respondent recalls going on "international travel with the client," and others mention having had "direct ownership of clients and deliverables with clear responsibility" and "immediate access to the firm's intellectual capital and people who are always willing to help." An associate adds, "Besides work, there were several social events to meet people and find out more about the firm."

In all, insiders insist, “You are treated as a full-time consultant, which is great because it allows you to make an informed decision.” A colleague agrees, “Everyone was very honest and straightforward with us about the good and the bad of consulting,” and they were “very committed to providing the interns with all the information we needed to make a well-informed decision about Kearney.” As a result, he continues, “joining and staying with Kearney has been the easiest career decision I’ve had to make.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Straddling lines

Most insiders insist that the culture at A.T. Kearney is all about striking balance. We’re told the environment at the “80-year-old firm with a startup feel” is “hardworking but relaxed,” “very friendly but at the same time results-driven,” “professional yet down-to-earth” and “constantly challenging, yet collaborative at the same time.” A manager in Toronto describes his colleagues as “intellectually gifted people who are also able to kick back over a drink,” and a cohort in Texas adds, “While everyone is there to do their best, there is not a competitive or backstabbing environment of people trying to get promoted or recognized over others.” Or, as another higher-up puts it, “We don’t compete with ourselves, we compete to win.” She explains, “We are a group that is motivated and competitive in the marketplace, but collaborative and team-based.”

Of course, not everyone is quite so content. A few staffers grumble that “everyone seems too caught up in work,” and some warn, “It’s hard to ask an honest question and get an honest response—it feels like you get the company line.” One new hire quips, “People are friendly when you see them, which is hardly ever.” But most agree that the “collaborative, engaging, fun and entrepreneurial” atmosphere makes for “high morale.” Plus, adds a principal, “Since our management buyout from EDS, A.T. Kearney has been reinvigorated. We have recaptured what has always been best about the firm, and have fixed the issues that were troubling us a few years ago.” A colleague agrees, “The firm is changing for the good,” adding, “I think we will be stronger than ever in the coming years. It’s a great opportunity for those that want to join.”

“A melting pot”

A number of staffers tell us that the firm “is very diverse with a very international flavor,” and say its “culture is a melting pot of diverse backgrounds and people, where each can easily adapt.” We’re told there are “a number of formal diversity networks within the firm,” including “programs and networks to support women” and a “GLBT diversity group called GayTK.” In addition, reports a GLBT staffer in Texas, “the firm is very receptive to hiring and promoting GLBT individuals.” He notes that A.T. Kearney “could use a greater number of senior GLBT role models,” but is happy that “the firm has nondiscrimination policies and procedures in place for GLBT employees and offers domestic partner health care benefits.”

Some do warn, however, that “we have a far way to go with getting adequate representation of blacks and Latinos,” and “we are behind where we would like to be.” But a New York-based associate feels that the firm pursues “very aggressive and supportive minority recruiting,” and a principal adds that “detailed analysis of our recruiting practices has revealed no discrimination in the firm.” “I am African-American and believe my firm is making a sincere effort led directly by the CEO,” shares a manager.

On the gender front, a female source comments, “we have made improvements with respect to hiring and mentoring women. We are continuing to improve our numbers at the principal and partner level.” And a vice president notes, “We monitor our recruiting process in detail to track the percent of women at each stage.” “The strong effort is paying off, and we are seeing far more female consultants in all ranks,” a Chicago-based manager interjects, adding, “I’m currently working on an all-female team led by a woman partner and principal (I’m the only male).” In all, although respondents say diversity is “an area we need to do more in,” the firm seems to be focused on inclusion. A higher-up states, “I’m part of diversity recruitment team and I can attest to our strong diversity commitment.”

Hard for some ...

Some insiders say the firm could also improve on its efforts to promote a reasonable work/life balance. According to one source, “It’s strategy consulting; I didn’t take this job to get work/life balance. That said, work/life balance at A.T. Kearney, like most consulting firms, is poor.” A senior business analyst grumbles, “I know that I have to work more weekends in comparison to my friends at peer firms,” and a colleague complains, “The firm constantly preaches that we work 55 to 60 hours per week and rarely on the weekends, but it’s not at all true. I work 75 to 80 hours a week, and most weekends. Our firm has no work/life systems or processes to control excessive workloads.”

... easy for others

Then again, many longtimers report that the firm has made a “great improvement over the last two years” in this area. And others say they’re perfectly content with their schedules; one associate states, “It’s an easy balance due to little work on weekends and reasonable project staffing levels.” A business analyst insists that as far as she’s concerned, “managers are very responsive to your personal plans,” and another recent hire adds, “It is important to me to not have to work weekends ... and so far, I have been able to manage that.”

“Consulting is like a marathon”

In an effort to reconcile the two sides, some explain that the onus is on the consultant to create decent balance. “You have to work at it,” a principal states. “Time management is key.” A partner agrees, “I carefully manage my work during the week to work hard and to play hard. A career in consulting is like a marathon ... you need to pace yourself or you’ll burn out.” And another partner comments, “We value people’s requirements when they are proactive about their needs.” But other factors are at work as well: One newbie notes that balance “depends on which type of project you are on. Some focus on balance, whereas others don’t.” Senior staffers may have an easier time of things, since “things get easier as you grow in the firm.”

Given the differences in opinion on balance, it’s perhaps not surprising that staffers report highly varied workloads. A senior business analyst states happily that “hours are not bad at all, and people are not concerned with face time.” But a manager who works 75-hour weeks disagrees, noting, “Even at manager level, sometimes the work is ‘make work,’ rather than value added.” Meanwhile, an unhappy associate who works 80 to 100 hours per week admits, “I am thinking of leaving the firm because work/life balance is so poor.”

Take a breather

But there’s no need to leave permanently, since there are plenty of options for taking a break to rejuvenate. An associate explains that “A.T. Kearney provides attractive amounts of vacation and leave time for consultants. And, in addition to time off, the project nature of consulting allows for informal breaks in intensity as projects ramp up and down.” Others point out that “short-term leaves of absence/sabbaticals can easily be taken,” and that “part-time programs are available for those interested in working three to four days per week.”

We’re also told “there is no requirement to work from the office when not traveling to a client site.” This flexibility is especially helpful to new parents: There is a “great parental leave of absence (PLOA) program for both mothers and fathers,” and a manager reports that the firm “makes an effort to staff locally before birth and after PLOA.” In addition to a ‘parents in a pinch’ child care program, other benefits include a “strong health care package,” “relocation reimbursement” and a “generous ‘no receipt’ policy for expenses incurred below a certain amount—much better than at other firms.” As another nice perk, some offices “stock good snacks, fruit, soda and other drinks.”

Overall, we’re told that work spaces are in “premium locations” and in “nice buildings.” “We have a really terrific office—both in design and functionality,” praises a staffer in Chicago. And a manager in Detroit agrees that his “office size and atmosphere are well suited to encouraging and building the strong culture the firm boasts.” In fact, a principal beams, “Our offices win architectural awards.”

Expect to travel, or change careers

Then again, office comfort isn't a huge concern, since "most consultants spend less than 20 percent of their workweek in the firm's physical office space," as the "typical travel schedule is Monday through Thursday." Moreover, "working overseas usually requires a two- to three-week trip." Some consultants are perfectly happy to be on the road all the time, like one recent hire who remarks, "Travel has been helpful in all the projects I have worked on thus far. It helps you understand the client challenges better, and aids problem solving and developing client relations." A co-worker adds, "The firm just started a new mobile policy where they are giving everyone a BlackBerry, so it helps us be productive in the airports, which makes things better."

Others moan that the travel demands are "exhausting" and "very challenging." A manager remarks, "Often, it means getting home very late on a Thursday, delaying work that could have been done, thus pushing it off to the weekend." Plus, notes a senior business analyst, "If clients request it, you stay Fridays."

Some say consultants "can request local projects in special family situations," and a principal shares that "the firm has always been very supportive in allowing me to work from home to support my family when needed." Others offer a cautionary note, saying "there are always special situations where the firm accommodates your need to be local, but little effort is made to balance travel and being home for those staffed on out-of-town engagements." Overall, advises a principal, "If you can't deal with the travel, it is definitely time to rethink career choices."

The big payoff

Most insiders say the (literal) payoff is worth all the fuss. An associate in Chicago comments, "Sure, I'd like to work less, but I don't think there's a position anywhere else that offers this sort of a salary with any fewer hours." A longtime executive indicates that "compensation has gotten much more competitive since 2006," and a junior staffer adds, "Our firm has made the commitment to benchmark consultants' pay against top firms, such as BCG, Bain and McKinsey, and they appear to have gotten close to that commitment." Meanwhile, a principal boasts, "Since our MBO, the firm has consistently paid at the top end for the consulting industry. Base compensation, bonus payments, profit sharing, retirement planning and equity appreciation give A.T. Kearney the highest wealth-building value proposition in the consulting industry."

Others mention pluses like a "401(k) contribution" and a "discretionary annual performance bonus," as well as profit sharing—provided you are "vested (40 percent after two years, 20 percent every year after until 100 percent after year five)."

Critical of class time

Another plus for junior staffers is that the firm offers "full-tuition MBA scholarships for high-performing consultants." That's good news since, as a senior business analyst notes, "most are asked to get an MBA after promotion to associate." A.T. Kearney also provides its own official and unofficial training, although opinions differ on how effective those programs are. A partner insists, "We have invested significantly in training," and others say there is a "good mix of formal and informal training" with a "very strong mentoring and coaching culture." "Every day on the job, senior consultants mentor junior consultants on how to be better consultants," claims a principal in Dallas. Plus, explains an associate, "a schedule of formal classroom-style training is offered each year, focused on core consulting skills as well as industry and service practice offerings." A colleague in New York says there is "almost too much to take advantage of."

But others claim training is "not very consistent," and say it is "trailing peer firms." One recent hire remarks, "The new-hire training (one week off site) was nice," but complains that "follow-up on training is not well organized and is very sparse. I am disappointed there are not more web-based things." And a senior business analyst snubs, "Official training is limited and weak, and managers will often request you skip it for client work at the last minute."

Star supervisors

Still, despite any woes about official training, many insiders do agree that there is "lots of on-project coaching," and that "the A.T. Kearney team structure is very collaborative and nonhierarchical." "It is not uncommon to partake in a weekly

brainstorming session with the partner and team,” reports a recent hire, and a co-worker adds, “I have had a very open relationship with my supervisors, with constant guidance and opportunities to take ownership of my work right from the first project.” “I have the utmost respect for all the managers and partners I have worked with,” praises a newbie in Dallas. “They are generous with their time, intelligent and insightful, and have greatly accelerated my development and maturity—all of which are the reasons I chose A.T. Kearney.”

Respondents also say they have plenty of opportunities to interact with senior-level clients. “As a junior consultant, I’ve personally met with and advised five CEOs and six senior vice presidents at various clients,” reports a source in Detroit. Another recalls, “As a new associate, after only five months with the firm, my client asked me to be the only consultant to help her present the findings from our project to the board of directors of a \$20 billion utility.” “Associates and analysts can work directly with client CEOs and CFOs,” and a new hire states, “In my first week, I was presenting to the general manager of a \$100 million-plus division, and have worked hand-in-hand with VPs of Fortune 100 firms.”

Putting in the time

All this early experience in the hot seat is bound to help when it comes to promotions. A partner explains, “We hire the type of people who are driven to succeed and who are active learners. They demonstrate the ability to operate at the next level, and we quickly promote them along.” We’re told the firm is “moving toward an up-or-out policy,” especially since “turnover is at historic lows.” However, an analyst reports that the policy is “rational and flexible in that you’re given enough time to succeed. Consultants are promoted once they are already performing at the next level ... when that depends on each individual.” A manager agrees, “We value potential more than past performance—so as long as there is potential, we invest.” A colleague explains, “Each level has a minimum and maximum time line. If you have not demonstrated that you can perform at the next level by the time you reach the maximum time in grade, you will be asked to leave the firm. The firm does go out of the way to give you feedback and help you address any issues preventing you from moving to the next level.”

Overall, an associate remarks, the path up includes “roughly 24 months time in grade (TIG) for associate to manager, 36 months TIG for manager to principal, and another 36 months TIG for principal to partner.” A senior manager adds, “In general, our consultants’ time to partner from associate is 10 to 12 years.”

Encouraging initiative

While climbing the ladder, there are plenty of opportunities to give back to the community. Staffers tell us A.T. Kearney is “deeply involved in a number of organizations and causes that are selected largely on the passion and interests of our consulting team.” For example, a manager in Chicago notes that his office holds “charity events throughout the year,” including a “children’s memorial hospital holiday party,” a “United Way drive,” “teaching at a school on Chicago’s south side” and “Race up the Hancock,” and also does “pro bono consulting with the city of Chicago.” A principal in Dallas reports that he works with “the Down Syndrome Association of Dallas,” and has “done pro bono work for the Dallas Opera.” A business analyst praises, “Whether it involves consultants teaching lesson plans at inner-city school districts, participating in Habitat for Humanity or hosting charity drives for the United Way, A.T. Kearney highly encourages community service involvement.” In addition, an associate shares, “the firm has pledged to reduce its carbon footprint to neutral by 2009 through a variety of initiatives.”

IBM Global Business Services

New Orchard Road
Armonk, NY 10017
Phone: (914) 499-1900
Fax: (914) 765-7382
www.ibm.com/consulting

LOCATIONS

Armonk, NY (HQ)

Offices and operations in 170 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Application Services

Application Management
Custom Application Development & Systems Integration

Business Consulting Services

Customer Relationship Management
Financial Management
Human Capital Management
Strategy & Change
Supply Chain Management

THE STATS

Employer Type: Division of IBM, a Public Company

Ticker Symbol: IBM (NYSE)

Managing Partner: Ginni M. Rometty

2008 Employees: 190,000

2007 Employees: 190,000

2007 Revenue: \$54.1 billion*

2006 Revenue: \$48.3 billion*

*Includes Global Technology Services revenue

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#6 – Operational Consulting

#10 (Tie) – Energy Consulting

UPPERS

- Vast resources
- "The ability to work with myriad clients"
- "Multiple avenues to improve yourself"
- Global name brand

DOWNERS

- "Bottom-line focus"
- Politics that come with working at a large company
- "Too structured"
- "The lack of tuition assistance"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.ibm.com/consulting/careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "True technology plus business integrators"
- "Want a server with that?"
- "Unmatched resources"
- "Large and poorly integrated"

THE SCOOP

Welcome to the machine

IBM Global Business Services is the consulting segment of massive computer services firm International Business Machines Corp. (IBM, naturally). The segment offers application services, which focus on technology development and integration, as well as more traditional strategy and organizational services, through which it advises on customer relationships, financial management, human resources and supply chain management. Clients are drawn from an array of industries, including aerospace and defense, banking, electronics, financial services, government, health care, retail, transportation and others.

A chip off the old PwC

GBS was preceded by the corporation's business consulting services division, which was a restyling of PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting, a unit of PwC that IBM acquired in 2002. PwC had made a failed bid to take the unit public, and subsequently chose to sell it, allowing IBM to double its 30,000 consultants and claim the title of largest consulting firm in the world. The addition fit nicely into a larger shift at the company away from commodities toward a service model, which would culminate, in 2005, in the divestment of its personal computing business. The company threw its full support behind the division, courting former PwC clients with a "win-back" program and making selective acquisitions of consulting and advisory firms to add and enhance its capabilities. The shift in 2002 was not merely a change in business complexion, but in leadership as well—Sam Palmisano, once head of the global services segment, was named CEO. There was no question of the direction the company would be heading.

Research readiness

Effective consulting requires access to fresh research and analysis. The firm maintains sources for both through the IBM Institute for Business Value and the Center for Business Optimization. The Institute for Business Value is an offshoot of GBS, consisting of 60 consultants at work on research and analysis across multiple industries. It studies market signals as they arise, measuring the impact of changes to identify business trends even as they take shape. The Center for Business Optimization, also operated under the purview of GBS, provides advanced analysis of large data sets, pulling precision information out of statistics, investments, forecasts and other patterns.

For all the world to see

With the behemoth size and strength of IBM behind it (hundreds of offices in 170 countries), GBS is active the world over, and has a continually growing physical presence. In March 2008, the firm announced the launch of IBM India Institute for Business Value, bringing the division's signature research capabilities to the Indian market. The organization will perform the same functions, anticipating industry trends, searching out potential areas for innovation and creating preliminary maps for reform and change initiatives.

That same month, the company opened a supply chain innovation center in Beijing. The center will offer tools and modelers aimed at the creation of more agile and adaptable supply chain processes and networks. It also features a carbon trade-off modeler, which allows companies to determine their carbon footprint and accurately identify it as a variable when rearranging supply chains. The new center was unveiled during the company's third global supply chain summit, a conference attended by senior executives involved in major supply chains worldwide.

In February 2008, IBM announced it would build a global center of excellence for water management in Amsterdam. The facility will take advantage of the company's consulting, technology and research capabilities to assist public-sector clients, in Holland and elsewhere in the world, to develop prediction and protection systems for low-lying coastlines and river deltas that are at ever-increasing risk of flooding due to rising sea levels and other weather-based implications of climate change.

Money on their minds

Underpinning the processes and functions of any enterprise, whether completing a supply chain or protecting a river delta, is the money that sustains them (and in most cases, drives them). As such, GBS' financial management practice works to improve the use and inflow of capital. Its express spend management service guides an organization's indirect spending by increasing spend visibility, tracking realized savings, ensuring governance and spending compliance, and promoting long-term sustainability, financial viability and end-to-end integration. The practice advises CFOs on improving the top line, reducing costs, reducing accounting complexity and mitigating risk. It makes heavy use of technology, designing and implementing finance and accounting programs.

Friend to the police

In the U.S., federal agencies, as well as state and local governments, make use of the company's services. Foreign governments, especially those of Canada and Western European countries, are also frequent clients. Services include finance and administrative advisory, digital integration, public safety and homeland security, postal system organization, border management and social services. For law enforcement, GBS offers a crime information warehouse system that integrates an organization's data into a new repository, while ensuring its consistency and accuracy. The data can then be accessed through multiple views, including offenses or incidents, dispatch and arrests. The warehouse is an intranet-based solution, allowing quick access for authorized users without any local PC maintenance. Information becomes available immediately, speeding the law's response to critical situations.

Bread and butter

No matter how focused on services it becomes, IBM remains a high-tech organization at heart. Fortunately, the two schools can be combined, as evidenced by GBS' application services practice. The staff boasts experience with nearly every type of application (meaning software and software engines), from legacy mainframe systems to web-based and custom applications, and even off-the-shelf packaged solutions from PeopleSoft, SAP, Siebel Systems and other vendors. The practice can also make use of IBM's global testing organization, a group of test centers that perform software testing and services designed to increase stability, reduce cost and boost productivity.

In January 2008, the firm announced the acquisition of Cognos Inc., a publicly traded provider of business intelligence and performance management solutions. The purchase came as part of IBM's information on demand initiative, a plan aimed at enhancing its strength in information integration, content and data management.

Top performer

IBM was honored in 2007 by both *Fortune* and *BusinessWeek* magazines. *Fortune*, in conjunction with Hewitt Associates and RBL group, ranked the company eighth on its list of the Top Ten Companies for Leaders. Organizations were considered for the list based on their ability to produce successful and influential leaders. *BusinessWeek*, going by the survey results of The Boston Consulting Group, named the firm No. 9 among The World's 50 Most Innovative Companies. This list was compiled using the responses of almost 2,500 executives who were asked to consider the design capabilities and uniqueness of consumer experience provided by different corporations.

Also in 2007, for the 20th consecutive year, *Working Mother* named IBM one of the top-10 on its list of the 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers. IBM was additionally selected by the publication as a 2007 Best Company for Multicultural Women.

Toward a better society ...

The sense of responsibility that makes IBM a good place for mothers and multicultural women also obliges it to work toward social betterment. In 2007, IBM created a Global Citizen's Portfolio, a grouping of investments and programs meant to encourage volunteerism and social-sector work among employees. One of the first programs in the portfolio is the Corporate

Service Corps, a large-scale project calling for 600 staffers to work in emerging and developing countries. Corps members will cooperate with nongovernment institutions seeking to spread economic opportunity and educational access. IBM has committed to spending \$60 million over the next three years on the Global Citizen's Portfolio.

... and a better planet

In 2007, IBM also partnered with the Climate Systems Analysis Group at the University of Cape Town in a global computing effort to improve regional climate models. The project, known as AfricanClimate@Home, taps into the power of the World Community Grid, a virtual supercomputer powered by hundreds of thousands of private individuals who donate their unused computer time. Researchers intend to use the grid to improve the climatological models in small regions of Africa, producing more specific—and therefore more valuable—predictions. Climate change, dangerous anywhere, is particularly devastating in a place like Africa, with its lack of health care and other social services. Droughts lead to famine, while flooding can lead to numerous diseases, both water-borne and mosquito-borne.

GETTING HIRED

Online or on campus

Insiders say the hiring process typically starts when a “resume is submitted” through the IBM web site. After that, “the candidate is assigned a phone screen” with a recruiter. “If the candidate passes the phone screen,” he or she is invited to the office for two or three “face-to-face interviews,” conducted by senior managers. For campus hires, the process involves “one on-campus interview, one on-site interview and one phone interview.”

Sources list the University of North Carolina, Colgate, Georgetown, Duke, University of Maryland and American University as regular target schools; there's an up-to-date list of campus recruiting events on IBM's career site. According to the firm, students should submit resumes through their school's career office for preselection. Recruiters are looking for undergraduate and graduate students majoring in business, engineering, computer science, math, industrial and labor relations, instructional design and systems. A 3.2 GPA or higher is a definite advantage.

Focus on experience

The average IBM interview has “no special tests or questions.” “I don't remember any tricky questions,” one consultant says. “They did ask me questions such as, ‘Describe a situation when you had a difficult problem to solve as a team leader.’” On the careers section of its web site, IBM offers more general tips: Candidates should strive to be specific in answering questions, and have concrete examples and experiences to discuss. They should also be able to explain why they're interested in consulting and working at IBM, and should have a solid grasp of the firm's consulting work and lines of business.

One last piece of advice: According to IBM, its campus interviewers—typically managers or above—submit their reports electronically, so candidates must e-mail a copy of their resume to the interviewing manager once they've scheduled a first interview. Candidates are also advised to bring hard copies of their resume and transcripts to interviews for reference.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Appreciation would be appreciated

There's a “very diverse and interesting” group of consultants working at IBM GBS, and insiders say that “most people are kind.” The firm's “flexibility” is a definite upside, as is “the name, the wealth of opportunities and the benefits.” But one downside is the fact that “sometimes there are a lot of politics, as it is a very large company.”

A senior consultant also says IBM could do better in terms of showing appreciation for hard work. “We receive so many e-mails about utilization, profit and performance, but rarely do we receive e-mails thanking us for our work, even at year end,” he says. Perks like appreciation dinners or lunches are not the norm, “which makes the practice appear ungrateful and, to be honest, cheap.”

Earn it

Appreciation aside, sources say that “if you do a good job, you will get recognized and promoted.” The promotions policy “is very structured,” and advancement “is based on your performance rating,” though “the manager’s discretion” may also play a role.”

Because of the rigid promotion policy, some consultants “wait years in between promotions, which can be very discouraging.” But on the positive side, “compensation is evaluated every year, and consultants can expect to see some sort of pay raise on an annual basis.” That’s a merit-based decision as well: “The percentage of the raise is directly reflective of your performance for the past year.”

Tough, but flexible

“The expectation is to work a minimum 45-hour workweek,” a senior consultant reveals, and others say they work “about 50 hours per week,” give or take. “My schedule is very flexible,” one satisfied staffer says. A California-based insider adds, “They try to emphasize work/life balance, but also expect us to work a certain percentage of overtime.”

“My project managers are always understanding regarding personal commitments, like taking time off for graduations or visiting family,” explains a respondent. “However, I have gotten some very strange looks and a few negative remarks on certain occasions when I have not taken my laptop home to work in the evenings or on weekends—even though I have put in a very long week at the office.” A colleague believes the firm puts excessive focus on the clock, saying, “IBM does place too much emphasis on the work hours and not the quality of the work produced during those hours. As such, efficiency is not stressed, as the total number of hours is the only measurable evidence of your work efforts.” Another problem? “With a lot of global employees, it is necessary to work at night or early morning or on weekends due to the time differences.”

Up front admission

The actual travel requirement can vary by office and assignment, but as a D.C.-based staffer puts it, “IBM states up front that you are expected to travel 100 percent, so it should be no surprise if you travel. With that said, I am part of the public-sector consulting division, and have yet to travel outside of D.C. for work.” Others say there can be leeway to work off site, “unless the client requires consultants on site for security reasons.”

To help consultants juggle work and family commitments, the firm notes that, in some cases, it does offer certain “workforce flexibility options,” such as part-time employment, flex-time, leave of absence programs and opportunities to work from home or remotely. When consultants are working from IBM offices, they say “the perks are minimal,” but they appreciate the “clean, well-equipped” space.

Sweet benefits

New hires start with 15 days of vacation per year, plus 12 holidays, and the 401(k)—known as the IBM Savings Plan—lets employees contribute up to 80 percent of pre-tax pay, and up to 10 percent after tax. For eligible employees the firm will match dollar for dollar up to the first 6 percent of contributed pay. There’s also a voluntary employee stock purchase plan that lets employees buy IBM stock at a 5 percent discount.

“While other firms may have higher salary compensation, the benefits, savings options and other IBM discounts are priceless,” a source declares. Another agrees, praising the “amazing health benefits, free dental insurance, free health insurance with the PPO option and great prescription discounts—great coverage overall!”

Budget crunch bites training

An insider raves about the opportunity for consultants to interface with top client executives: “Every role that I have filled has been client-facing—department-level CFOs, division chiefs, CIOs, etc.” As for training, it’s “plentiful,” with “both official and unofficial training opportunities.” A selection of free, online courses gets props, but one source notes that “it is difficult to get a classroom course that costs money because the training budget is limited.” A colleague agrees that “the training budget is minimal,” adding that “most training opportunities have been denied to me because I am in the public-sector division, which has a smaller training budget. Even courses that are key for promotion have been canceled.” One respondent suggests that the firm should “offer some form of tuition assistance. Many practitioners leave due to a lack of tuition assistance.”

Pro-charity

Staffers say IBM is doing well on most diversity fronts; according to one respondent, “The vast majority of my supervisors are women,” and another remarks, “I am pleased to see minorities in upper-management positions.”

The firm also makes “many efforts” to give back to the communities in which it works. It “strongly encourages” consultants to get involved “through networking groups and IBM clubs.” “They have a ‘week of caring’ twice a year, and are always having some sort of magazine, book, clothing or food drive,” a source notes. “They also encourage us to do charity work individually and record it online, and they do offer grants for charitable organizations that you can apply for.”

Accenture

1345 Avenue of the Americas
 New York, NY 10105
 Phone: (917) 452-4400
 Fax: (917) 527-9915
www.accenture.com

LOCATIONS

Offices and operations in more than 150 cities in 49 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Consulting

Change Management • Customer Relationship Management • Finance Management • Human Resources Management • Marketing Sciences • Service Management • Strategy • Supply Chain Management • Workforce Performance

Outsourcing

Application Outsourcing Services • Business Process Outsourcing Services • Infrastructure Outsourcing Services

Technology

Application Renewal • Enterprise Architecture • Enterprise Solutions • Information Management • Infrastructure Solutions • IT Strategy & Transformation • Microsoft Solutions • Mobile Technology Solutions • Performance Engineering • Radio Frequency Identification • Service-oriented Architecture • Systems Integration • Technology Consulting

Operating Groups

Communications & High Tech • Financial Services • Products • Public Service • Resources

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: ACN (NYSE)
Chairman & CEO: William D. Green
2008 Employees: 178,000
2007 Employees: 170,000
2007 Revenue: \$19.7 billion
2006 Revenue: \$16.65 billion



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Rolling at a steady pace"
- "Too technical"
- "Big, back-the-truck-up projects"
- "An army of consultants dilutes the brand"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Areas

- #1 – Operational Consulting
- #5 – Energy Consulting
- #7 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting
- #8 – Human Resources Consulting

Quality of Life

- #10 – Formal Training
- #16 (Tie) – Relationships with Supervisors
- #19 – Offices

Diversity

- #8 – Diversity for Minorities
- #12 – Best Firms for Diversity
- #13 – Diversity for Women
- #16 – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- "Merit-based promotions and rewards"
- Opportunities to work in every industry and across all aspects of business
- "You truly feel like you are a part of an elite group of professionals"
- "A state-of-the-art training facility"

DOWNERS

- "Knowing we could get paid more elsewhere"
- The trappings of a large, public corporation
- "Constantly having to fight being placed on technology-oriented projects as a management consultant"
- "It can be a very competitive place to work"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

careers3.accenture.com

THE SCOOP

Size XL

With offices in more than 150 cities across 49 countries, and employing over 178,000 people, Accenture's size speaks for itself. The firm organizes its business according to the service rendered and the client type, with service specialties belonging to three platforms: management consulting, systems integration and technology, and outsourcing. These platforms are then available through five operating groups: communications and high tech, financial services, products, public service and resources. Using this taxonomy, the company assembles client engagement teams by choosing industry experts (from the appropriate operating group), capability specialists (versed in the appropriate service platform) and consultants with knowledge of the local market. Clients include Fortune Global 500 and Fortune 1000 companies, midsized businesses, government agencies and other major enterprises.

Mashed-up moniker

The name Accenture is a neologistic blending of the phrase "accent on the future." Originally called Andersen Consulting, the company was formed in 1989 by a group of consulting partners from multiple Arthur Andersen firms worldwide. It acted as a business unit of Andersen Worldwide Société Coopérative (AWSC), an administrative entity that coordinated the giant network of Andersen Consulting and Arthur Andersen locations, until being legally separated from its parent on January 1, 2001. This separation was the result of almost three years of arbitration by the International Chamber of Commerce (at the request of Accenture), which ruled in August 2000 that the contract between the two corporate bodies had been breached. AWSC, the arbitrator determined, had failed to prevent competition between the company and the Arthur Andersen member firms.

Although rumors emerged that the name change was an attempt to conceal involvement with Enron (Arthur Andersen performed accounting for Enron, and was completely ruined by its implication in the scandal), the historical time line proves this impossible. Investigation of Enron by the Securities and Exchange Commission did not commence until October 2001.

Going streaking

The company's revenue in 2007 hit \$19.7 billion, an increase of more than \$3 billion on 2006's total of \$16.65 billion. This marked the sixth consecutive year of record earnings. Geographically, 48 percent of 2007 revenue (\$9.53 billion) was generated in the EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa) region; 43 percent (\$8.48 billion) was generated in the Americas; and 9 percent (\$1.68 billion) came from the Asia Pacific region. Accenture also increased its employee headcount by approximately 30,000 over the course of the year, and secured \$21.97 billion in new contract bookings.

Island Inc.

Accenture is incorporated under the laws of Bermuda, a British island territory known for its minimal direct taxation on corporate income and relatively lax regulation of business enterprises. Although over 1,500 international companies are registered in Bermuda, especially those in the reinsurance industry, Accenture's 2001 decision to incorporate on the island stirred up criticism and controversy. Detractors in the U.S. argued that an entity based in an offshore tax haven should be barred from competing for federal contracts, and a law was proposed before Congress in 2002 to that effect, although it was ultimately defeated. Accenture, in lobbying Congress, pointed out that it had never previously been incorporated in the U.S., and thus should not be maligned as a tax dodger. It additionally claimed that favorable tax laws were not Bermuda's only draw, citing the geographic neutrality of the island as an attractive trait, given that more than half the firm's partners hold foreign citizenship.

Money from the government

Accenture is fortunate that Congress didn't pass that law, as it works frequently with the public sector, often on multiyear projects. In December 2007, New York City renewed its contract with the firm to continue progress of the 311 Customer Service

Center, a consolidated local source of information and nonemergency services for residents. The new focus of the project is the development of NYC.gov, the official web site of the city (the original idea in 2002 had been to combine 11 phonebook pages of government listings into a single, three-digit number).

In October 2007, Accenture launched the first phase of a project aimed at updating and improving the U.S. Air Force's financial systems. Working at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, the headquarters of both the Air Force Communications Agency and the U.S. Transportation Command, Accenture has already replaced the commitment accounting functions of the old system by implementing DEAMS, the defense enterprise accounting and management system. Forthcoming are changes and improvements to cost accounting, purchase requests, accounts payable and customer billing, among others. The firm's five-year contract with the Air Force, worth \$79 million, began in 2006.

Another major opportunity, or more accurately, bundle of opportunities, came in August 2007, when Accenture was granted the Alliant Government-wide Acquisition Contract by the U.S. General Services Administration. This centralized contract, holding a 10-year term and a \$50 billion contract ceiling, allows Accenture to bid on task orders from agencies seeking infrastructure, application services and IT management services. Equal privilege was granted to only 28 other companies.

Leave it to Accenture

In its broadest categories, Accenture performs two types of work: consulting and outsourcing. Outsourcing accounted for 40 percent of revenue in 2007, a portion little changed from 2006, although CEO William Green expects outsourcing to eventually make up half of overall revenue. Reflecting this goal, Accenture brought in BPO contracts from some major global corporations in 2007.

In September, the company signed a seven-year, \$185 million deal with Microsoft to provide finance, accounting and procurement services. The project work, including management of accounts payable, travel and expense, and record-to-report functions, as well as requisition-to-purchase-order processing, will be deployed in 92 countries where Microsoft operates. Some of these tasks had previously been outsourced to other vendors, but are now consolidated under Accenture's responsibilities.

That same month, Accenture entered into an agreement with BT for just over five years of business process outsourcing. Services are related to management reporting, financial planning and analysis, month-end close activities and budgeting/forecasting, and will be delivered through Accenture's centers in India. Additionally, in January 2007, the company was tapped by property and casualty insurer AIG Europe SA for a 10-year, €100 million contract to provide IT support.

Jobs head east

As evidenced by the BPO deal with BT, much of the company's outsourcing is provided through global delivery centers in Southeast Asia, especially India. The reason for the practice is obvious, as employee cost in those regions is far lower, enabling huge profit margins. The extent of the practice, however, may come as a shock: By the end of 2007, the firm employed more people in India than in the U.S. Accenture's network of global delivery centers has grown to more than 40 locations and upwards of 75,000 professional staff. The centers are concentrated most densely in India (with 12 locations) and the Philippines (eight), compared to just six delivery centers in the U.S. (10 total in North America) and nine in Europe.

Shopping spree

Accenture has been highly active in acquisitions of late, picking up new businesses at an astonishing pace. In February 2008, it bought Maxamine, a provider of testing and optimization services aimed at improving web site performance. The purchase was sought as a means of enhancing Accenture's existing marketing sciences capabilities. Bolstering that area also motivated the December 2007 acquisition of Memetrics, a provider of web site targeting services.

Another dovetailing pair of purchases was made in December 2007 and January 2008. First came MAXIM Systems, Inc., a defense consulting firm specializing in advanced engineering and technical services for military and intelligence agencies. Following this buy, the company grabbed Gestalt, LLC, a defense consulting firm engaged in mission-support services, such as

modeling and simulation, command and control systems and energy management, for the U.S. Department of Defense. Both businesses were seen as strong additions to the firm's U.S. defense practice. December 2007 also saw the acquisition of Corliant, Inc., a technology consulting firm that deploys and manages Internet protocol networks. The transaction was attractive to the firm as a chance to bolster its network technology offerings.

Dude, where's my identity?

Accenture suffered a pratfall in September 2007 when it was revealed that the identity data it had collected on hundreds of thousands of Americans was lost. The firm had been working with the state of Ohio to build an information database, aggregating taxpayer ID numbers used by Medicaid providers, bank account numbers for school districts and local governments, as well as the names and social security numbers of state employees, lottery winners, welfare recipients and anyone owed state tax refunds (over 500,000 people). In June 2007, a computer tape holding all this sensitive information, as well as a great deal of tax and bank account information related to the state of Connecticut, was stolen from the car of a 22-year-old intern. Yet to be determined is the degree of responsibility Accenture bears for the negligent security practices that resulted in the "data spill," but the company has agreed already to pay for two years of identity theft protection for 57 affected citizens in Connecticut.

Extra channels

The sort of data spill Accenture enjoys far more, however, is the overflow of its research and business insight that regularly appears in the online journal *Outlook*. Released three times a year, *Outlook* focuses on high-performance business strategies, providing perspectives and case studies written by industry experts. The cover story of the January 2008 issue discussed the shift in global talent pools and the increased competition for prime employees.

Accenture also produces a newsletter called *The Point*, written by its global financial services executives. The publication delves into current trends and analysis in financial services, covering such topics such as risk management, deregulated markets and customer retention.

Do-gooders

Accenture believes it bears a responsibility to give back to the communities in which it works, either financially or by encouraging volunteerism within its ranks. The firm sponsors a grant program that helps fund global charitable organizations or campaigns, especially those directed at aiding developing nations. Some of these include the African Medical and Research Foundation, a not-for-profit health care promoter based in Kenya; Room to Read, a literacy advocacy program focused on Asia and Africa; and Junior Achievement, which brings business curriculum to young people in many countries around the world. In addition, Accenture employees are offered leaves of absence to volunteer their time to charitable campaigns, and projects are sometimes accepted on a pro bono basis as well.

Known and liked

Accenture's efforts both inside and outside its offices are well recognized. In March 2008, for the third consecutive year, *Fortune* magazine ranked the company No. 1 in the IT services realm on its America's Most Admired Companies list. The ranking is compiled by surveying executives, directors and analysts on companies in 70 industry categories, with only the 10 largest in each sector (by revenue) considered. Criteria include innovation, use of assets, social responsibility and quality of service/products, among others. In September 2007, *Working Mother* magazine named Accenture a Best Company for Working Mothers, marking the fifth time in a row that it's been chosen. The publication lauded the firm for its flexible schedules, telecommuting options, maternity leave provisions and child care plans.

GETTING HIRED

Behavior supersedes skills

Insiders say the hiring process at Accenture is “comprehensive, fair and rigorous,” with typically “three rounds of interviews.” The first two rounds take place over the phone and/or on campus (the firm recruits at “most major universities”), and the final round is held in an Accenture office. As one recent hire frankly states, “If you make it to the in-person office visit interview, you usually have been selected unless you screw up majorly.” It may take a while to find out just how well you did, however—we’re told there’s often a “very lengthy wait for responses.”

When it comes to specific interview content, a manager explains, “For entry level, interviews are mostly behavioral questions. For experienced hires, there is a screening interview, a skills interview, a performance factor (behavioral) and a closing interview. For strategy candidates, there are case interviews.” Another staffer advises that “involvement and leadership experience weigh equally with, if not more than, grades.” And a colleague adds, “Our interviews focus on identifying key behaviors and attributes more than looking for specific skills. This is because working at Accenture means you will be put in many different situations where you need to adapt and learn quickly. We are looking for smart, flexible people. The other skills can be largely taught.” Others agree that many interview questions are “very experience-driven, such as ‘Tell me about a time you were upset with a co-worker. What exactly did you do/say/feel?’”

Fair-weather analysts

Insiders add that summer internships at Accenture are a “great opportunity to see consulting firsthand.” We’re told that “interns are treated as new analysts,” and are “assigned to a project with specific deliverables and activities.” A recent hire recalls that his summer experience “included typical analyst responsibilities,” and was “valuable in learning the consulting/Accenture culture before I started full time.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

High drive, low drama

In a nutshell, says a manager at the firm, Accenture’s culture is “high performance, but not high maintenance.” On the high-performance side of things, the firm’s atmosphere is “very driven, focused on client delivery” and “very focused on success,” with a “get stuff done and make it happen” attitude. A Los Angeles-based staffer states, “Being successful in the consulting workforce here means you must excel at all aspects of your career (client relationships, team development, building your own expertise and adding value to the firm).” “People are very driven to work hard and perform their best,” agrees another. As a result, we’re told that processes “are efficient and move fast,” and “information is readily available.” At the same time, there’s not a lot of drama, and “there aren’t too many big egos.” In general, the firm is “down-to-earth and pretty practical, without a lot of fancy trappings or titles.” A higher-up agrees, “There is a culture of straight talk and approachability at all levels.”

Lending a helping hand

Meanwhile, insiders note that in addition to being “highly intelligent, dedicated and overachieving,” co-workers are also “friendly, collaborative, cooperative and supportive.” “Most, if not all, of my colleagues have a genuine intellectual curiosity and will help you out if you just ask,” offers an insider, “I’ve reached out multiple times to people I’ve never met, and always received a helpful response,” agrees another.

Accenture’s internal version of Facebook no doubt assists along these lines (we’re told the firm has an “internal people directory,” where staffers “can load a photo of ourselves, a biography, our contact info, project experience and areas of expertise”). A recent hire in Texas remarks, “I have not run into anyone who is trying to stab anyone else in the back to climb the ladder,” adding,

"I'm always impressed that I can pick up the phone and call a colleague from anywhere in the world and in any one of Accenture's groups, and they are very willing to spend time sharing the experience they have or helping me with my problem." If that's not enough, respondents say "it is not unusual for many colleagues, even across pay grades, to be friends and otherwise have a good time outside of work." A Georgia-based staffer explains, "Many folks from top-tier schools compare their lifestyle to college, in that they are working long and hard just like those that studied hard in undergrad, but then go out and have a good time as much as possible together outside of the office." As a senior source points out, "A large number of the people who leave us eventually return—we call them boomerangs. The most common thing people tell us they miss when they leave is the people they worked with."

Large size leads to wide variety

Of course, experiences vary, especially between projects. As one analyst notes, "Some projects have a culture of positive reinforcement, teamwork and recognition. Others have a workhorse/sweatshop culture." A colleague explains that since the firm is so large, "each operating group in the company breaks itself down into communities of 100 or less, where you focus your networking and skills building, and where the overall culture of the company is experienced. Depending on your particular community, you may have a very different culture."

Still, most respondents agree that the culture "of the firm as a whole is very good." A senior manager sums up Accenture's mantra: "Do what is best for the clients, the company and our people." And because of the firm's large size and its "hundreds of clients," consultants are excited that it is "involved in just about every functional area and industry," so "if you want to learn more about something or broaden your experiences, it's available."

Make the most of the ups and downs

With all the emphasis on getting results, it's no surprise that workweeks tend to be from "50 to 60 hours, on average." "It's expected that people work hard in our business," affirms a senior manager whose hours are on the higher end. And, notes another, there are also "periods of intense sacrifice for about six weeks during the year (80 to 100 hours a week)." Still, adds this insider, "There will be times where you're just going to have to work a lot, but then there are times where you won't. Learn to enjoy the highs and the lows." An experienced hire agrees, "You learn to enjoy the slack times so that you can buckle down when requirements are more demanding. You also learn to use your vacation time wisely."

40-hour weeks? Not in this business

Some staffers say that being in control of their schedule makes the hours more tolerable. A staffer in Minneapolis reports, "I can work short hours one day and then long hours the next day to make up for it. As long as I get my work done on time, I have the ability to manipulate my working hours." A manager echoes, "My experience has been that whatever I have asked for in terms of work arrangements, my firm has been very flexible in working with me." Besides which, insists an analyst, "Anyone who expects a 40-hour workweek shouldn't be in consulting."

Another analyst agrees that, "on a large scale," work/life balance is reasonable at Accenture, since staffers are allotted "amazing vacation time" (five weeks worth), and there are "great opportunities for occasionally shortened weeks"—as well as the "ability to work from home on Fridays." In fact, some say that "working from home is encouraged whenever possible." A senior source explains, "I focus on my clients and Accenture 100 percent Monday through Thursday, use Friday as a flexible day depending on work demands and focus on family 100 percent Saturday and Sunday."

Set your own boundaries

That being said, there's no getting around the fact that, "on a daily basis, the hours can be grueling." Plus, an analyst warns that "clients demand face time," which means that although he can "get [his] work done in 40 hours," he spends closer to 60 in the office. A senior manager agrees, "Many of the work hours are unnecessary, and are simply an artifact of our culture of 'being there.'"

But as a respondent with more than a decade at the firm sees it, “Accenture and its clients will take everything you give them.” As a result, he insists, “it’s an individual’s responsibility to manage that, and that is possible.” Another longtimer agrees, “You have to know what you personally are willing or not willing to sacrifice from your time and stick to it.” Others add, “It’s all about the boundaries you set,” and “you need to know when and how to say no.” “I will often draw a line in the sand between work and life,” reports a business analyst, “and my colleagues and managers respect it.” Plus, he adds, “I’ve had to work on weekends, but then was given time off during weekdays when things slowed down.” A colleague describes a similar experience: “If I work more than 50 hours one week, my manager makes an effort to reduce that the following week. Also, my career counselor (firm mentor) will support me if I have been working strenuous hours for months on end.” Others agree that managers make “a significant effort to promote a healthy work/life balance for their team” and, in general, the firm “will work with you to meet your personal needs.” “One of the biggest challenges I observe,” a manager interjects, “is that people are afraid and don’t ask.”

Should it all just become too overwhelming, we’re told “there is a sabbatical policy where you can take extended time away and come back to your job.” Specifically, there are “three-month leave of absence arrangements where you can stay employed (get insurance, etc.) but not be paid.” A consultant “can take up to three of these absences in his career, as long as they are a certain time apart.”

Pack your bags

Of course, there’s only so much room for flexibility and boundaries when it comes to travel, since Accenture’s “policy is to work on the client site.” Insiders say the norm is to head “out on Monday morning and back Thursday evening,” according to a “typical 5-4-3” consulting schedule (“five work days, four at the client site, with three nights out of town during the week”). It’s worth noting, too, that “occasional [travel requirements on] Friday and Sunday do pop up.” One manager reports, “I have traveled almost every week for the last five years.” Most insiders say they “knew travel was part of the job” when they signed on, and “it’s just something you deal with.” “You simply have to adjust your personal schedule and expectations,” remarks a source. Plus, warns a higher-up, “No matter how long you commute or travel to the client site, there is a general expectation that you work during those hours, as well.”

Special arrangements are possible ...

However, specific travel schedules may “vary based on your home office location” and on “your area of expertise.” A San Francisco-based staffer notes, “There seems to be a greater and greater effort to keep employees closer to home when possible.” And there are some who have found a niche at home for quite some time. A consultant happily reports, “I have been lucky to be local for all of my (almost) five years with the firm. The majority of the traveling I’ve done to date has been one week here and one week there type of travel, and never for more than a few weeks in a row.” Similarly, a senior manager exclaims, “I haven’t traveled in 10 years!”

Others add that “travel requirements can be tailored for individual needs.” One manager claims, “If I said I didn’t want to travel anymore, they would work with me. I wouldn’t stop traveling overnight, but they would work it so eventually I could stop.” And another lucky respondent shares, “I have been able to coordinate my travel with my fiancé (who also works for Accenture) such that we typically work with clients in the same geographic area, which makes the travel less impactful.”

... but compromise is key

But others say “it often seems that those who wish to travel end up on in-town assignments, and vice versa.” Finding a perfect fit seems to be the exception rather than the norm. As another manager puts it, “You will work with your mentors, career counselor and HR rep to make sure that the roles you end up in are the right ones, but they won’t always be in your backyard. Likewise, you can work with your network to find local opportunities if there is a personal imperative or priority for working close to home, but again, you may give up that stellar role. You must learn to compromise.” Frankly, insists a senior manager,

“if a person is not willing to work at client site (perhaps out of town) for days (sleeping out of town three nights), then they are working for the wrong company. Accenture makes it clear that this is most likely a requirement during the hiring process.”

The benefits of being a road warrior

Not that the travel is all bad. It's easy enough to settle into new environments, since “Accenture has done an outstanding job of creating a virtual office culture,” which means that “no matter where I am in the world, I can go to an Accenture office, sign in and work like a local employee,” a respondent explains. And sometimes it's better to be on the road than off: “I take advantage of it by traveling for pleasure many weekends,” explains a more recent hire, “as well as working late to get my work done during the four days I am away so that I usually have a two to two-and-a-half-day weekend to play. Generally, I find myself having more free time—due to our great vacation package and weekend protection—than most of my friends who work in town.” Travelers can “can fly anywhere, fly someone out to you or stay at your location, as long as it is cheaper than what it would cost to fly home.” And instead of meal reimbursements, travelers receive per diems. “I usually only spend a fraction of my per diem,” says one analyst, adding, “I pocket the rest, which adds up to thousands of dollars over the year.” Plus, “you keep all your travel points and miles,” and “in-town commutes are often worse.” We're also told that higher-ups benefit from a “new ‘executive travel perks’ program, which recognizes road warriors and provides small perks (e.g., webcams, authorization for AMEX Corporate Platinum cards for airline lounge access).”

Bonuses—a misnomer

Staffers are pleased to tell us that “analysts and consultants make overtime after 48 hours per week.” Meanwhile, “managers and above have equity in the firm.” That being said, many staffers complain that Accenture's salaries are just “average or below average” for the industry. One manager goes so far as to claim, “I think we are notoriously underpaid.” The firm does offer a profit sharing, a 401(k) matching program and “up to 10 percent of salary in an employee stock purchase plan at a 15 percent discount,” as well as “performance bonuses.” Still, a longtimer moans, “Our bonus program is very poor compared to other companies. Ours is merely a drop in the bucket and typically doesn't mean much.” Another echoes, “I don't really consider Accenture's bonus a bonus since it is so small. It is an embarrassment and is what I like least about Accenture. It is way out of line compared to other firms.” A frustrated source complains that “a new MBA hire coming in as a consultant can be making more than a manager who grew up with the firm and has more experience.”

But despite the lower paychecks, many insiders are still content. “I know I could be making more with a different consulting firm,” says a senior manager in D.C. “However, it would be difficult to find another company with this type of culture and commitment to work/life balance.” Plus, an insider in New York comments, “We have recently begun to focus on being more competitive.” And, adds a manager, “If you stay here for a few years, things will even out such that you are compensated fairly, relative to those who perform at similar levels.”

Take advantage of the discount directory

In other perks, there is a “great benefits program,” and the firm provides “incentives to participate in health and wellness initiatives.” Specifically, explains a senior manager, “We receive health reimbursement arrangements for achievement of milestones in some programs, such as completing Weight Watchers, achieving one million steps in the 10,000 steps per day program or completing an ergonomic assessment.” There's also a “discount directory with negotiated discounts on a wide variety of items,” including “flowers, electronics, athletic clubs, auto sales and telephone services.” And, a respondent adds, “We recently rolled out a reward system known as Celebrating Performance, where an individual is rewarded with points that can be used to purchase merchandise or gift certificates.” Others get excited about the “yearly formal dinner/dance that our significant others are invited to.”

Train and network at the same time

Some respondents feel that one of Accenture's top perks is its "campus-type training facility outside Chicago," which "offers an experience that most people won't ever have." "Since our official classroom training is in one global location," remarks a manager in Arizona, "it's amazing to go and learn with people from literally all around the world. You definitely learn that there's more than one way to skin a cat, and your way may not always be the right way."

All new hires spend five weeks immersed in official training, and whenever consultants are staffed on a project that "requires specific skills" or are promoted, they are usually sent for more training. Some say that, for better or worse, the classes are "basically just weeklong networking/partying" experiences, but others note that "what you put into it, you'll get out of it." In general, the "first several years with the firm include a fairly extensive core training plan that everyone must follow." Throughout it all, Accenture "tracks your development and generates curriculums for you to complete." To that end, explains a staffer, "we have unlimited access to a very large number of free computer-based training courses, and we generally attend one classroom training course per year (for three to five days)." In total, there are "approximately 40-plus hours of required training each year."

In addition, the firm "will pay for external training if it doesn't exist internally." There's also a "Podcast network," which one Chicago-based consultant says has "made my commuting better." And in the realm of unofficial training, the firm "provides a lot of mentoring through career counseling and other informal mentoring relationships." One senior manager notes, "The career mentoring and counseling are really excellent." More unofficially, "most managers are open to sitting down and teaching more junior members," as well as "discussing problems and addressing issues."

Supervisors seek success

Insiders note that, overall, "access to leadership is excellent," and that most supervisors are "genuinely interested in how you are doing and want you to succeed." A senior source happily reports, "The leaders who I work for are all people that I admire and who have great talent. They have always taken an active interest in my development and in the development of others." A recent hire agrees: "My managers generally become friends and mentors at the same time. They truly are interested in my holistic development, personally as well as professionally." "On the whole," sums up a D.C.-based staffer, "Accenture managers and senior executives are proven leaders who are excellent people developers."

Plus, a recent hire adds that, "depending on the project, there is opportunity for business analysts and consultants to have significant interaction with clients." A colleague notes, "Day to day, I typically work with clients at the director or VP level. This has been great exposure for someone in their early 20s, straight out of undergrad." Still, another consultant warns, "On some projects, I worked directly with very senior executives, while other times I ended up locked away in a cubicle with little exposure. Don't join Accenture expecting much in this regard." On the other hand, a new hire finds that "interacting with clients' top-level management is highly dependent on the project," but insists, "Most managers/leads will make an effort to introduce the analysts to the top-most client they themselves are interacting with."

Move up or move on

Climbing the ladder at Accenture is a "laid-back, up-or-out" process, also known as a "grow-or-go policy." As one consultant explains, "Candidates who do not consistently make promotion are counseled out of the firm." However, it's generally the case that "people who are not promoted usually leave by choice to find a company that better suits their personality and interests." Moreover, "there are opportunities within the company (internal positions, services, etc.) where people can move to accommodate shifting priorities in life."

By and large, consultants "advance to the next level in two to three years," although the "senior manager to partner promotion point can be a little longer," due to a "logjam of people" vying for those spots. Moving along a fast track will "get you to partner in 12 to 13 years," a respondent notes. That being said, being a top performer doesn't necessarily speed up the process dramatically—merit counts, but "time at a level is just as important as performance."

Culture clubs

Staffers say that, as a global firm, Accenture “draws from a very diverse talent pool,” and “recognizes the need and the value to employ a talented and diverse workforce.” Insiders say there are “various minority clubs” and ethnicity “networking groups” within the firm. One staffer notes that “there is a large amount of minorities” in her San Francisco office, along with a “thriving Asian American networking group,” adding, “I attended an Indian cultural night on one of my projects, which was a great learning experience. It is amazing the time and effort that goes into those functions, especially considering project obligations.”

Still, there’s always room for improvement, and some say Accenture “struggles to hire and retain underrepresented minorities.” For example, notes one recent hire, “there are plenty of minority programs, and communications occur all the time. However, it’s important to determine how you define ‘minority.’ If you mean African-Americans only, then I’d say it’s not that great.” A director adds, “This is an area where we have a lot of focus and want to continue to improve.”

Initiatives may not be enough

We’re also told that HR has “a huge focus on attracting, retaining and advancing women. Our retention and advancement rates are generally the same across genders.” Insiders agree that “Accenture is extremely diverse in terms of women, and women are well represented and well respected at Accenture.” Others comment that “the flexibility of scheduling helps recruit and keep women.” “There is also a Great Place to Work for Women initiative, and on larger projects Accenture will start a women’s initiative team for both ACN and clients,” an analyst adds. A female manager in Phoenix echoes, “I actually lead a local women’s group. It offers me another channel to network, learn and grow—and it’s all supported and sponsored by Accenture.”

Nonetheless, although the firm’s “CFO is a woman,” some say that “more women need to be represented at the firm’s most senior executive levels.” One female manager agrees that the firm has “several initiatives to help promote women’s advancement in the company,” but adds with disappointment, “I continue to see only single women in executive positions (e.g., not balancing family) or men with stay-at-home wives who manage it all while they work ungodly hours. I’m not inspired yet.”

In other networking opportunities, one openly gay staffer explains that “there are local GLBT groups within Chicago that provide networking opportunities.” But many staffers claim the firm’s GLBT diversity is “not very visible”—though some believe this “is a testament to a very accepting culture.” A respondent offers a hopeful note: “It is getting better at least, and they have started a process to target GLBTs.”

Active at home and abroad

One issue that insiders wholeheartedly agree on is Accenture’s commitment to community involvement, insisting that “we are involved everywhere,” and that corporate philanthropy is a “major part of our culture.” A respondent explains, “The firm sponsors a wide range of community-building efforts, including pro bono consulting for nonprofits, tutoring students in cities, and clothing and toy drives, among other activities.” And a senior source agrees, “Accenture does a ton of pro bono stuff, and is very active in the communities where it does business. I am proud to work for Accenture based on this factor.” We’re told that “each office has its own corporate citizenship agenda, and all employees are encouraged to be active.” For example, says a New Yorker, “My local office does state park cleanups, Junior Achievement, Habitat for Humanity and plenty of other events.” Plus, a manager notes, “if they don’t have what you’re looking for, bring it up and they’ll help you make it happen.”

In addition, there are “global programs in which staffers can sign up to do consulting work abroad for nonprofit organizations.” These “Accenture development partnerships” allow employees to spend “three to 12 months” working on projects “in developing nations, either as pro bono or on partial pay.”

The Parthenon Group

200 State Street, 14th Floor
 Boston, MA 02109
 Phone: (617) 478-2550
 Fax: (617) 478-2555
www.parthenon.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (HQ)
 San Francisco, CA
 London
 Mumbai

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate & Business Unit Strategy
 Education
 Innovation & Growth
 Merger & Acquisition
 Non-Profit
 Private Equity
 Profit Improvement
 Strategic Value Capital

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman & Managing Partner: William F. Achtmeyer
2008 Employees: 200
2007 Employees: 175

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #1 – Compensation
- #1 – Firm Culture
- #1 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #4 – Overall Satisfaction
- #8 – Best Firms to Work For
- #8 (Tie) – Interaction with Clients
- #8 – Offices
- #11 – Formal Training
- #20 – Travel Requirements

Diversity

- #15 – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- Exposure to C-level clients from the start
- “Our reputation with business schools”
- “We dedicate a completely irrational amount of time and money to having fun”
- Highly competitive compensation

DOWNERS

- Little opportunity for international work
- First-years face especially long hours and a steep learning curve
- Slow formal promotion path
- The “two case model” and its effect on work/life balance

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.parthenon.com/careers

E-mail: recruiting@parthenon.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Friendly, active, fun”
- “Hard lifestyle”
- “Gives responsibility quickly”
- “Tall, blond and all-American”

THE SCOOP

Through the Doric columns

The Parthenon Group is a strategy consulting firm with a side interest in hedge fund management. Based in Boston, with additional offices in San Francisco, London and Mumbai (opened in January 2008), the company's client roster covers the usual suspects—organizations engaged in manufacturing, financial services, health care and consumer products—as well as institutions involved in education and nonprofit work. Its services primarily focus on strategy and growth, along with a private equity practice that advises on investment, due diligence and portfolio improvement.

The firm was founded in 1991 by John Rutherford and Bill Achtmeyer, both formerly with Bain. Parthenon Capital, a private equity firm, was subsequently established and run by Rutherford. The firm continues to act as an advisor to this private equity offshoot.

Loaded name

Parthenon is named after the ancient Greek temple devoted to Athena. Although Athena was the goddess of wisdom, and that works well for marketing purposes, she was linked to an additional (and somewhat paradoxical) trait—one made clear by the temple's name, which translates to “of the virgin.” These facts are not explored in depth by the company, however, as it would undoubtedly rather be associated with wisdom—or just ancient, beautiful architecture—than with inexperience.

More at stake

Parthenon, in line with its stated philosophy of pursuing lifelong “partnerships” with clients, offers unconventional risk-sharing payment structures, including working for equity and success fees. Under the work for equity method, Parthenon is compensated with a stake in the client corporation, thereby clarifying quite sharply the goal of a consulting project. Equity gained in this manner is held for a set period and its sale is generally discussed with the client beforehand to avoid disruption of the market for those shares.

Success fees also fit with this “in it together” commitment, as they are only paid when certain agreed-upon objectives are met. Although traditional billing is available to clients, the firm reports that its work is best when accountability is highest.

Full speed a-hedge

Further exhibiting its comfort in working with stock, in 2007, Parthenon launched its own hedge fund, Strategic Value Capital. SVC is an attempt to utilize the analytical resources and industry expertise of the firm's staff to inform the selection of long and short investments. Targeted stocks belong to small and mid-cap U.S. and Canadian public entities. The unit also serves as a crash course, of sorts, for associate and principal consultants, since they are assigned to SVC teams for three to six months to follow the investment process and assess the potential of companies in the portfolio.

SVC's work dovetails with the firm's private equity practice, which also uses a three- to six-month rotation of associates and principals, and calls on identical skills, directed, in this case, toward client portfolios. Both units are best suited to evaluating investments in the company's consulting areas, such as manufacturing, health care, financial services, consumer products and education.

Eye on education

Parthenon consultants' experience in education is derived from work with the Education Center of Excellence, another of the company's practice units. ECE is a major advisor to the education sector, serving clients worldwide in the U.S., Europe, Latin America and Asia. Clients include educational publishers, K-12 service companies (which provide assessment materials, data

services and instructional tools), academic foundations and large urban school districts. Projects are tailored to client needs, but can involve growth strategy, operational changes, school district reform or even commercial due diligence.

Words of advice

When not moving money around or on a client engagement, the company contributes to business thought with its *Parthenon Perspectives* and *Edupoints* newsletters. *Parthenon Perspectives* is a broad take on trends in the economy, recently featuring discussions of price behavior in the stock market, the state of the U.S. dollar and the possibility of recession. *Edupoints* focuses on matters of education, with recent issues espousing the firm's views on K-12 business models, the use of technology in corporate training and the home-schooling market. Both newsletters are available free to the public on Parthenon's web site.

GETTING HIRED

Be prepared for number crunching

The hiring process at Parthenon is "standard but extensive" and, as one insider notes, prospective hires "will end up meeting with upwards of eight members of the firm by the time they receive an offer." Qualified applicants for an entry-level associate position will typically go through "two to three rounds of both standard case and fit interviews." MBA grads start with "one round of on-campus recruiting with two 30-minute interviews." A senior principal explains, "One of these interviews focuses entirely on a case question, and the other is largely a fit/resume discussion." Next, he adds, "those who make it to the second round visit our offices, where they have three additional interviews, including a case interview. Before the case interview, candidates review a set of case materials for 30 minutes. They then spend 45 minutes discussing the case with their interviewer, who facilitates the discussion. Our partners are involved in both on-campus interviews and those in the office."

Some first-round case questions may be along the lines of, "How many miles were run in Nike shoes in the U.S. last year?" or "How many gingerbread lattes does an average Starbucks sell in a year?" Sources say other questions are "often based upon real cases from firm history and can include questions on a company's slowing growth, falling profits, desires for expansion, etc." A principal advises, "Expect to have a good, structured approach to cases, to talk through your thoughts and be thorough in your investigations. Also be prepared for doing some basic calculations on paper or in your head."

Insiders report that Parthenon focuses its undergraduate recruiting efforts at Harvard, Dartmouth, Williams, Duke, Princeton and Stanford. MBA graduates are recruited largely from Tuck, Sloan, Harvard, Wharton, Stanford, London Business School and Kellogg. One associate warns that it is "very difficult to get a job if you are not at a target school," but Parthenon does offer the opportunity to apply with a cover letter and resume sent to contacts listed on its web site.

Almost as good as getting married

Summer internships are also common at Parthenon, and we're told "the vast majority of summers receive full-time job offers." Plus, former participants say their summers at the firm were, in a word, "awesome." A former intern reports, "The Parthenon summer associate program provides a great combination of real-life work experience and social events. It gives you a very good idea of what consulting is, but also a great time for a college kid. I can tell you hands down that my summer experience was way better than any of my friends who worked at other consulting firms or investment banks. They referred to it as 'Camp Parthenon.'" A recent hire adds that, for her, the social events included "dinners with partners, white water rafting, a Bon Jovi concert, Red Sox games and plenty of parties/nights out." Plus, adds another, the experience is "pretty realistic in terms of the kinds of work you actually do as an associate, and as an intern I really felt like I was a valuable and integral part of my team." A senior principal enthusiastically announces that his internship was his "second-best summer ever!—the first being the summer I got married."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Smart, nice and driven—really

“Parthenon’s culture is simultaneously relaxed, intense, challenging and fun,” says a Boston-based associate. Others note that “the people at Parthenon are incredibly intelligent, and I am constantly challenged here,” and “simultaneously, the people who work here are incredibly nice.” An associate comments, “Parthenon takes its work very seriously, but never at the expense of forming strong personal relationships with colleagues.” A co-worker states, “People really do go out of their way to foster a collegial environment, whether it be firmwide social events or the firm’s flat structure. All of it adds up to a mentality where we are all equals working toward the same goals, and we are all valued.”

Fun, fun, fun

Respondents tell us there are “plenty of events, outings, parties, etc., that keep everyone pretty well enthused.” “It’s not often you find a job where you WANT to hang out with the people you work with during your free time,” says a recent graduate. Another associate agrees, “I look forward to work events as much as I look forward to events I have planned with my friends, and it is all because of the people and the personalities in our office.” Part of the reason the firm has “a high-energy, socially driven culture” may stem from the fact that “the average age in the firm is quite young,” but a principal assures us that the collegial energy doesn’t come across “in an overwhelming way.” Another senior staffer agrees: “I have tremendous respect for my colleagues on both a professional and personal basis. I enjoy my interactions in team meetings and at company events—some of my closest friendships have been formed here. This is a special place and I am really proud to be part of this corporate culture.”

A first-name basis

The slightly “irreverent but invigorating” tone is set from the top, notes a senior principal, who tells us, “Our CEO is a real character. He loves to have fun, and it is contagious.” He also “knows the name of everyone in the firm,” which helps build a sense of a “very strong community.” “I would feel completely comfortable calling any of the partners if I wanted to talk to them about anything. You can’t get that exposure at a bigger firm,” notes a senior associate. And even more junior staffers feel valued. A Boston-based staffer states, “As an associate, I have both good working relationships and genuine friendships with other associates, principals and partners. We work in an open office where people talk and socialize frequently and hang out. As an associate, you get an amazing amount of respect very quickly, and you are able to feel like a part of the family from the moment you start working at Parthenon.” Another recent hire agrees that he has been “impressed by the interest in and attention to associate development paid by partners and other senior members of the firm.” “I honestly could not be happier with the managers I have worked with at Parthenon,” raves a San Francisco-based associate.

Meet with CXOs from the start

And “on the client side,” adds a principal, “Parthenon’s culture translates into really strong and meaningful client relationships as well.” Even new hires are able to build these relationships: “I’ve been meeting with CEOs since two months after starting out of college,” says a senior principal. A recent hire reports a similar experience, stating, “In my first year, I have already been to meetings with the CEO, CFO and COO of one of our clients. On top of that, I have actually participated in these meetings.” “Parthenon is what you make of it—because it’s smaller than the megafirms you tend to have a better opportunity to work with partners of your choice and have unique client opportunities that help your own professional development,” another newbie comments.

Two-case means no suitcase

Another factor that helps “build office culture” is the “minimal” travel the firm requires. “We run on a two-case model (associates work on two cases at a time),” explains an associate, “so we work mostly at our offices and travel to the client site for management interviews, presentations, etc., but day to day, we work in our home offices.” “The on site with the client every day model is not part of what we do,” echoes a colleague. “We feel like can create a better culture and be more efficient by working from the home office as much as possible.” He adds, “Traveling for the purposes of face time is worthless to us.” Few staffers report spending more than one day on the road a week, and even when travel does come up, respondents say they “try to make most trips day trips.”

“I have traveled infrequently enough that it remains novel—not burdensome,” a source notes, and a senior associate adds that “you get to travel as much as you want to, so if you want to travel, there are plenty of opportunities for it. If you’d rather not, they can build that into your staffing.” That being said, higher-ups generally do need to travel more than junior staffers, but, says a principal, who reports traveling one to three days per week every other week, “I like the amount of travel I do—it’s enough to feel connected and keep things interesting, but not enough to become homesick.” As another adds, “Our time at the client is always spent productively and actually with executive-level clients.”

Eat dinner at home ...

As a result of spending less time on the road, “we have a much better work/life balance than some other firms, in general, because we are able to spend so much time in our home office and city.” A senior principal says that on days when he’s working from the office, “I get home by 6:30 each night to put my kids to bed. Sometimes I’ll check e-mail later, but I’m basically done. I have dinner with my family three to four nights during each workweek.” A colleague agrees, “The firm does not care how many hours you work or where you work those hours; the most important thing is to finish your work. This allows you to be very flexible in scheduling your time. I go home every night early to eat with my wife. I often work after dinner, but I am still able to have that time with her.”

Of course, says a Boston-based staffer, “As with all consulting firms, the job tends to have somewhat unpredictable hours due to the fact we are client-facing and need to be available to them.” And a co-worker adds that although it’s “usually possible to avoid weekend work and get out sensibly many evenings,” balance is “all up to the individual—hours are not seriously monitored by senior management, but case managers seldom make an active effort to protect work/life balance.” Agrees another, “I’ve found that I have been able to balance my work and life, but it definitely required some active commitment.”

... but not if you’re new

Many respondents say balance can be harder for newer consultants to achieve. An associate explains, “My first year at the firm was extremely busy and I rarely had free time in evenings or on weekends. Now I think I have gotten better at time management and working independently and quickly, but the first year was definitely a serious adjustment.” A colleague agrees, “Managers are mindful of commitments outside work, but when work really needs to get done, work wins out.” Still, he continues, “With enough notice, vacation plans are rarely interrupted.” Plus, others add, by and large, “managers are very understanding of personal conflicts, and it is completely acceptable to work from home or to work out of the office if you are trying to go somewhere.” As another insider puts it, “All in, consulting is a challenging business, but relative to other firms, I think the Parthenon culture handles balance quite well.”

When it comes to specific hours worked, “the general feel is that 50- to 60-hour weeks are normal, although there is some sense that working a lot is a sign of strength.” This is true especially among junior staff; an associate explains, “My first year, I averaged about 78 hours per week, with a high of about 100 and a low of maybe 60.” That being said, things have gotten easier since then. The source continues, “This year has become much more manageable—I work about 55 to 60 and I am completely happy. It all depends on workflow and your own ability to work quickly and efficiently, and manage your time well, which has a pretty long learning curve.”

Aren't we here to work anyway?

Others claim the longer hours simply aren't a problem. An associate remarks, "Though Parthenon may work slightly longer hours than other firms, I have never felt that I was working late for anything but meaningful and important casework. Additionally, I find my work very interesting, and thus do not mind working late occasionally." A co-worker comments, "We are always staffed and always working. We wouldn't want it any other way. I think that's a big difference between us and other firms. We are constantly being challenged and developing our skills through real work. Many of my friends at other firms are on the beach for six to eight weeks a year, and they complain that they don't get to do enough and aren't learning enough. We make the decision to go into consulting because we want to work and learn and develop professionally." Plus, as a senior principal looks at it, "I probably log a few more hours in the office than my friends at other firms, but they log a lot more flight time. In the end, it's less total work hours for me, so I'm very happy."

Downtime is rare, especially since the two-case model means "you are never without at least one client." "This is great for building experience, but don't expect a lot of beach time," says a principal. That being said, an associate consultant reassures us, "If your work is done or if you have nothing to do, you are absolutely not expected to be in the office for no reason."

A chain of mentors

Parthenon offers "both official and unofficial training," and we're told that "the culture is very supportive and oriented toward learning." A senior associate explains, "Our first month consists of nothing but training. All new associates go to our Boston office for three weeks and then one week doing off-site training. It gives you all the basics you need to know to get started, plus the opportunity to get to know everyone else really well." He adds, "It goes without saying that these training events are always a ton of fun." A recent hire agrees that the initial training was "amazingly helpful and fun, and really set the mood and the tone for the rest of our time at Parthenon." Furthermore, "associates are mentored by an associate one year older, and in turn mentor an associate one year younger." And "each associate has a quarterly mentor budget to do with it what they desire. Normal mentor events consist of lunches, dinners, sporting events, concerts, etc."

Some respondents say "there could always be more ongoing training," but others believe that "because this is an apprenticeship business, probably the most important training happens every day, and that's the learning you get from working with really smart people." Still, a partner notes that the firm "is working to improve its formal training program."

Move up by merit

Parthenon consultants must learn pretty quickly, since they "have room to advance quicker here than other firms." In general, a source notes, "associates are promoted to senior associate after about 20 months—and almost all are promoted. The next promotion is to principal, about 12 months later. This promotion is much harder to get (about 10 to 15 percent of a starting class). Promotion to principal comes with an offer to pay for business school if you choose to come back for two years." Then, a principal continues, "for post-MBA employees, an on-track trajectory is four years to senior principal and another four years to partner." Another adds, "Although there are not many different titles after grad school, responsibility increases very quickly so that in your second year you can be leading a full case team (not just a work stream as part of a case team)."

Insiders appreciate that the firm is a "complete meritocracy," and that "there is definitely no force-out if you are not promoted." A source comments, "People will respect your decision to remain working at Parthenon for as long as you like. Obviously, most people voluntarily leave at some point if they do not get a promotion, but it's not because they are being forced out of Parthenon from above." It's also entirely possible to move up at a fast clip: "A week ago," says a senior principal, "a colleague was promoted two-and-a-half years ahead of schedule."

The big payoff

Consultants' hard work is made up for by the compensation, which insiders say is well above average for the industry. In fact, we're told the firm "makes a deliberate effort to exceed compensation in the industry." A San Francisco-based associate reports,

"I think I make, and have made, far more than my peers at competing firms. I think my company does the best job at compensating you fairly for your work in the consulting industry." A senior principal boasts, "Both base and bonus are higher than McKinsey, Bain and BCG—and significant equity checks on top of that. I love it!" Moreover, adds an associate, when partners "find that Bain or BCG has raised their salary, they'll immediately bump us up so that we remain ahead."

A respondent notes, "Compensation is generous, and there are a host of noncash perks and benefits." For example, "we do get shares in the firm's equity investments—not large numbers, but it helps align incentives." A principal adds, "We receive equity in clients, and we have a hedge fund that increases the total bonus pool." Even better, adds a senior associate, is that, "especially for associates, this isn't a 'golden handcuffs' situation. This is a firm where you can walk away without leaving too much money on the table."

Lots of chitchat

Insiders claim that Parthenon offices aren't quite as luxurious as one might expect, given the top salaries. However, Boston-based staffers say their space "has spectacular views of the harbor and cityscape," and San Franciscans also say they have "unparalleled views." Things there are "a little crowded in the open layout," and it "can sometimes get loud," since consultants "sit very close to one another." But on the plus side, "it's a place where people look up and talk about jokes, funny stories on CNN, etc. This is how the great relationships get fostered." There are also "fresh flowers everywhere all the time," "sports memorabilia" lining the walls, "a pingpong and foosball table" and a "huge high-def television in the cafeteria."

"Parthenon swag"

Plenty of other perks keep staffers happy as well (one says his friends call them "Parthenon swag"), like "box seats at every sports team in town," as well as "orchestra and symphony tickets," "fabulous parties," "ski trips and other outings," not to mention "birthday gifts from the CEO." Additionally, "unlike some other firms, even entry-level consultants get to use the boxes at sporting events—in fact, they probably use them the most." An insider notes that the firm "pays for us to take a GMAT prep class, we have BlackBerries that we can use as phones, we have wireless cards for our computers, we can expense cabs home if we stay past 8 p.m. and we can expense dinner if we stay past 8." In general, there's a "casual expense policy on team or mentor meals out," plus "the entire company is closed the week between Christmas and New Years, which doesn't count against your vacation days."

If all that isn't enough, a senior principal adds, "we also have a 22-foot sailboat in Boston Harbor that is available for firm members who can sail any time." A senior associate raves, "Any Parthenon event is so far above and beyond expectations that it never ceases to amaze me. From the annual company meeting where the whole firm comes together for three days of meetings and debauchery (my first year we went to Bermuda for our 15th anniversary) to the holiday party to any sort of office outing, mentor event or case team event. I've never heard of a company that spends so much time and money on providing entertainment for its employees." There's also an "extremely generous health care plan," as well as "very generous leave policies, and a 'parents in a pinch' program, where they make babysitters available for anyone who may need it on short notice (work-related or not)." Oh, and "anyone at the firm is welcome to walk into the CEO's office at almost any time and help themselves to the candy jar." A colleague states, "Our founding partners are some of the most generous people I know. They host groups at their houses, take people out to lunches very frequently, and will stop at almost nothing to make sure their employees are happy." An associate consultant chimes in, "The perks provided by the job here make the hours we put in worth it."

Generous across the board

Parthenon also makes a strong effort to share the wealth through "pro bono cases in the office, charitable contributions and volunteer work." Insiders say corporate social responsibility is "definitely a big part of the firm's culture." A principal details, "The firm has a charitable contributions committee made up of consultants at all levels who decide where to allocate an annual budget of donations." Pro bono cases have included the Special Olympics and new American schools, and organizations the firm

has donated to have included Make-A-Wish and the Boston Symphony. Plus, “associates at Parthenon can participate in Inspire, a nonprofit consulting firm made up of associates from top-tier consulting firms.”

Building diversity over time

When it comes to diversity, respondents say Parthenon “has made very tangible investments” and is “continuing to improve on this metric every year.” Although “there are no special programs” to promote diversity with respect to GLBT staffers, “there are openly gay employees here and it is business as usual.” The firm does, however, “work hard to attract women at the associate level,” and seems to succeed—as one staffer reports, “the new associate class is 60-plus percent women.” Things are less balanced among higher-ups: A senior principal observes, “Like our competitors, we haven’t figured out the formula to keep the number of women at the partner level on par with the men, but that is an industrywide issue. Parthenon really values the women we have in the senior ranks and will bend over backward to keep them.” One female principal asserts, “As a woman, I have never once felt that I was treated differently—I have received great mentoring by both men and women, and have had great professional development, etc. We hire the best candidates, and very often the best candidates are women, although we don’t have quotas.”

As far as ethnic diversity, we’re told that some offices, such as London and Mumbai, are “extremely diverse and international.” Boston, however, is “an overwhelmingly preppy white office.” A senior associate in that office confirms that “while it’s a current priority, the firm has not yet succeeded in bringing in a lot of diverse candidates.” A West Coaster agrees, “I think this is definitely an area where Parthenon could improve. I think minorities do well at Parthenon in terms of promotions, but we could do a better effort in recruiting more minorities.” Still, respondents note that “with each incoming class, there is more and more diversity.”

345 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10154
Phone: (212) 758-9700
Fax: (212) 758-9819
www.kpmg.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

Offices in 148 countries worldwide, including 82 in the US

PRACTICE AREAS

Advisory

CFO Advisory
Financial Risk Management
Internal Audit Regulatory & Compliance
IT Advisory
KPMG Forensic
Operations Risk Management
Transaction Services

Audit

Tax

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

CEO: Michael P. Wareing

Chairman & CEO, KPMG LLP (USA): Timothy P. Flynn

Global Head of Advisory: Bernd Schmid

Vice Chairman, Advisory, KPMG LLP (USA): Mark Goodburn

2008 Employees: 123,000

2007 Employees: 130,000

2007 Revenue: \$19.81 billion

2006 Revenue: \$16.88 billion

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#10 – Financial Consulting

UPPERS

- Young, ambitious co-workers
- “Seems like good timing and a nice place overall to start a career”

DOWNERS

- Stiff, “white-shirt mentality”
- “Large egos”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.kpmg.com/Careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Cross-domain biggie”
- “Big Four consulting syndrome”
- “Big emphasis on diversity”
- “Same old accounting culture”

THE SCOOP

Back in business

Professional services giant KPMG, an international network of independent member firms, is organized around three service lines: advisory, audit and tax. Its roots date back to 1870, when accountant William Barclay Peat hung out his shingle in London. In 1911, Peat's firm merged with New York-based Marwick Mitchell & Co., forming a business that in later times became known as Peat Marwick. Meanwhile, over in Scotland, Glasgow accountancy Thomson McLintock partnered with Dutch and German accounting firms to create Klynveld Main Goerdeler (KMG), an alliance of independent practices operating throughout Europe.

The 1987 tie-up between KMG and Peat Marwick was considered the first megamerger of modern accounting, and the resulting entity, dubbed KPMG, organized its consulting activities into a business unit in 1997. Three years later, in response to concerns raised by Enron's collapse, KPMG spun off KPMG Consulting in an initial public offering. The now-separate consulting business took over KPMG's advisory work in several companies, eventually changing its name to BearingPoint in October 2002. BearingPoint now trades on the New York Stock Exchange, and has no relationship with its former parent.

As part of the spin-off, KPMG and its former consulting business signed a noncompete agreement. This expired in February 2006, allowing KPMG to re-enter the advisory business. In North America, KPMG member firms include KPMG LLP (USA) and KPMG LLP (Canada).

One of three

Today, KPMG's advisory practice operates alongside its core audit and tax businesses. Through each independent member firm, the KPMG advisory unit provides a range of consulting services to Fortune 1000 companies around the world. Services offered include CFO advisory, which guides CFOs and other finance executives on operations, controls, financial analysis and performance; financial risk management, which works with corporate managers and board members to identify, measure and monitor business risks; IT advisory, which assesses, designs and integrates information management, processes, technologies and controls; internal audit regulatory and compliance, which coordinates in-house audit operations with business and management goals; KPMG Forensic, which helps clients target, prevent and investigate internal fraud; operations risk management, which aims to improve performance and profitability; and transaction services, which advises clients on mergers, acquisitions and divestitures, both on the sell side and the buy side.

Up to speed

KPMG has moved quickly to rebuild its consulting unit: In 2007, member firms sold \$5.3 billion worth of consulting services. Mark Goodburn, vice chair of advisory services at U.S. member firm KPMG LLP, told *BusinessWeek* that KPMG's advisory practice was reaping rewards from the same cautious regulatory environment that prompted the Big Four to spin off their consulting arms in the first place. "Risk awareness has been changed forever," he said, noting that KPMG's forensic services and risk management consulting contribute heavily to the U.S. firm's bottom line.

"Ambitious objectives"

Commenting on KPMG's 2007 results, global advisory head Bernd Schmid dubbed his business line "the biggest potential area of growth for KPMG" in the coming years. "The advisory practice has ambitious objectives," he told investors. "By 2010 the aim is to have more than doubled member firms' revenues." Schmid also predicted that increased spending on worldwide infrastructure could provide a significant business boost; as such, KPMG is busy developing an infrastructure proposition that Schmid said could become "a \$500 million business by 2010."

Transaction services is another fast growing component of KPMG's advisory practice, and it's not just limited to M&A. The practice was launched in 1995 by Gopal Ramanathan, who remains global head of the division to this day. Currently, KPMG

has 3,500 transaction services professionals in 50 countries, working on IPOs, mergers and acquisitions, the formation or dissolution of joint ventures, divestitures and leveraged buyouts.

Regulations open doors

At the helm of KPMG LLP's advisory business is an unlikely leader. Steven Hill left KPMG when it spun off its consulting business. After serving as senior vice president of the stand-alone KPMG Consulting, Hill returned to his old stomping grounds in 2003. A former McKinsey consultant, Hill admitted in a 2007 interview with *Consulting* magazine that he briefly wondered why KPMG would want him back—after all, his life's work was focused on value creation, and KPMG was building an advisory business based on compliance services.

Hill recalled that he and KPMG executives agreed “that Sarbanes-Oxley brought much more to the marketplace than simply an exercise to establish greater rigor in financial reporting.” In other words, new regulations open up markets for compliance and risk advisory, but also create a “paradoxical change” in the business model. As Hill stated, “That’s where our firm differs from other firms. It’s not about what comes after compliance as much as it is about addressing a larger question: How does the notion of control and risk blend into the business-change conversation from this point onward?”

Since rejoining KPMG, Hill has been credited with much of the U.S. member firm's advisory growth, and he was ranked as one of the country's Top 25 Consultants in *Consulting* magazine's 2007 roundup. Younger KPMG consultants are gaining notice, too: In January 2008, 26-year-old Avani Mehta, a manager in the IT advisory practice was listed among the industry's 30 Under Thirty by *Consulting*. Based in Tampa, Mehta joined the firm at the age of 20 and was promoted to her current post just three years later, becoming the youngest manager in KPMG history.

What do CIOs think?

In March 2008, KPMG LLP partnered with Harvey Nash USA, a global search firm, to survey hundreds of chief information officers about the IT challenges they face. Stephen G. Hasty Jr., national partner-in-charge of IT advisory at KPMG, said today's complex business environment makes information technology “a critical business enabler” that can make or break a company. KPMG's survey found that while many CIOs are making progress toward integrating their operations, they're frustrated by a lack of involvement in strategy planning and wish they had more decision-making authority.

As a result, the survey revealed, more and more IT executives are losing loyalty to their employers, making them more willing to jump ship, despite being offered pay increases and promotions. The 2008 edition marked the third year of the CIO study in the U.S.; KPMG and Harvey Nash have conducted the survey for nine years running in the U.K. In connection with the survey's release, KPMG professionals and Harvey Nash executives hosted regional talks about their findings with technology organizations across the country.

Down 25 percent by 2010

Color KPMG green: In April 2008, KPMG International announced that its member firms were embarking on a three-part environmental program called the KPMG Global Green Initiative. The primary goal, according to Chairman Timothy Flynn, is a 25 percent reduction in member firms' combined carbon footprint by 2010. This will involve both an investment in renewable energy sources and limiting use of nonrenewable energy. Measuring and reducing the firms' emissions profiles is the first step in the plan; the second step involves supporting environmental projects in member firms' local communities. Finally, KPMG aims to help its clients and suppliers—and even employees in their personal life—reduce their impact on the environment.

GETTING HIRED

Well-fed candidates

Interviewing with KPMG involves a number of steps, some of which may even include a meal. An insider recalls, “I applied through my university’s career center and also on the firm’s web site. I was selected for an interview and was also invited to a pre-interview dinner. The dinner was very important for me to network with others from the firm, and gave my interviewer a good first impression. Speaking with representatives from KPMG at the pre-interview dinner also gave me ideas on questions to ask during my interview.” Another useful preparation strategy, as suggested by a source in Atlanta, is to “Google the people you plan to interview with, and flatter them with some knowledge of them that you have obtained.”

The string of interviews that follows will present multiple opportunities for flattery. A source illuminates the process further: “The first-round interview was on campus with a manager. Questions asked were all behavioral questions, nothing technical (no accounting or computer-related questions were asked). The second-round interview was at the office. I interviewed with three senior managers. The interviews were approximately 30 minutes each, one after the other.” Everything is capped off casually, and with more food. “After the interviews,” the source continues, “we (other interviewees and myself) were given a tour of the office. Then we all went to have lunch at a nice restaurant fairly close by.”

Crib sheet

A recent hire gives some insight into the sorts of questions candidates will face. “Tell me about yourself. What do you know about KPMG? Why did you apply for this position? Describe a time when you were pressured to make a deadline. Did you ever make a presentation? Have you ever led a project? Do you work well in teams? Where do you see yourself in five years?” We’re told that interviews consist of “mostly standard behavioral questions. What the interviewers look for is if you are sincerely interested in working for the firm. So be prepared with lots of questions to ask your interviewers for your second round.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Pleased as punch

Insiders sing the praises of KPMG’s culture. One gushes, “While everyone is a professional, you won’t get the ‘everyone seems dead serious’ feel at KPMG. Everyone is very nice and helpful, and you will feel very comfortable asking questions.” A senior associate agrees, “Culture is the best part of KPMG. It’s very laid-back, yet we definitely work hard. There are special team dynamics, as there are everywhere else, but managers for the most part seem to be quite fair and accessible.” Summing it up, a respondent notes, “Employee morale is high. Everyone I know truly loves working here and is enthusiastic about their job.”

Katzenbach Partners LLC

381 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016
Phone: (212) 213-5505
Fax: (212) 213-5024
www.katzenbach.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

Chicago, IL
Houston, TX
San Francisco, CA

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Strategy
Change Management
Formal & Informal Organization
Functional Excellence
Leadership & Capability Development
Motivation & Pride
Performance Improvement Initiatives

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Managing Partner: Niko Canner
2008 Employees: 160
2007 Employees: 175
2008 Revenue: \$52 million
2007 Revenue: \$53 million

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Kristen Clemmer
Director of Recruiting
Katzenbach Partners LLC
381 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

www.katzenbach.com/Careers/WorkingatKPL/tabid/78/
Default.aspx



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Exceptional boutique"
- "Full of themselves"
- "Open culture, great diversity"
- "Low profile"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#10 (Tie) – Human Resources Consulting

Quality of Life

#6 – Offices
#13 (Tie) – Firm Culture
#16 – Interaction with Clients
#16 – Overall Satisfaction
#17 – Best Firms to Work For
#17 – Hours in the Office
#17 – Work/Life Balance

Diversity

#1 – Diversity for GLBT
#2 – Best Firms for Diversity
#4 – Diversity for Minorities
#10 (Tie) – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- "Crazy fun times"
- "I've been able to make a real impact on firm policy ... and I've been here for less than two years"
- "I enjoy being here as much as I enjoy going out with friends or visiting family"
- Entrepreneurial environment where staffers feel empowered to make a difference

DOWNERS

- "The firm does not really seem to do a good job of balancing interests with staffing"
- Growing pains and limited resources of a small firm
- "You might be on the beach for a long period of time, depending on the project flow"
- "Very little international travel"

THE SCOOP

To the core

Katzenbach Partners, a rapidly growing management consulting firm with offices in New York, Houston, Chicago and San Francisco, serves clients of all sizes, focusing on the financial services, telecom, pharmaceutical, energy, managed care and enterprise software industries. The firm started out as a three-man operation in 1998. Its meteoric rise to become, already, one of the biggest names in the industry can partly be attributed to pedigree—its founder and namesake, Jon Katzenbach, was a McKinsey & Company consultant for 35 years, and came within a breath of being electing McKinsey's managing director in 1988. In its somewhat nontraditional consulting work, Katzenbach Partners casts a keen eye toward the informal systems (culture, personal interconnections and de facto understandings) that shape an organization, believing that these abstract qualities can affect success as much or more than strictly formal systems, such as corporate hierarchy and by-the-book strategies and programs.

Katzenbach Partners cuts through the extraneous or merely stylish issues to offer what it considers to be its core services. These include developing a full comprehension of the “physiology” of an organization—the sum of its formal and informal structures. The firm then assists the client to nurture and guide these structures toward increased productivity and performance. Another core service is business strategy, where consultants advise on growth and direction, pricing, adaptation and other matters. The firm's approach to motivation and pride helps clients determine what fuels employee commitment and peak performance. Tied to that segment, as well, is Katzenbach Partners' thinking on leadership and capability development, which is aimed at maximizing the value of individual contributions.

Forward thinking

The firm is also engaged in a number of innovative projects of its own making. One of these is the “empathy engine,” a conceptual approach to customer relationship management that emphasizes holistic involvement at all levels of a company, rather than leaving most customer interaction to frontline employees and most decision making to management. Katzenbach Partners believes the empathy engine leads to cost savings, improved reputation and greater market share.

Another project, launched by the firm in 2004, is CHINA 2024: A New Generation of Leaders. The 20-year-long project will monitor the development and career paths of 115 Chinese MBAs, all 2004 graduates. Having attended top business schools in the U.S. and China, the group will be surveyed every year and interviewed in-depth every four years until 2024. Katzenbach Partners views these young businesspeople—engaged in a variety of sectors, including consulting, banking, marketing, media, retail, health care, government, transportation, Internet, real estate and natural resources—as poised to change the face of business.

No firm is an island

Katzenbach Partners established a nonprofit advisory board in 2005, made up of employees with volunteer or philanthropic experience. A 2006 initiative paired the firm with Acumen Fund, a nonprofit venture fund and social enterprise that applies entrepreneurial methods to solving the issue of world poverty. The firm evaluated Acumen's management structure, and also assisted in the development of a 10-member fellows program, which supported the fund's projects in Africa and South Asia from September 2006 to September 2007. In another recent charitable initiative, Katzenbach Partners staffers volunteered as teachers at a Houston KIPP school, part of the KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) network of institutions providing free college preparatory education in underserved communities.

GETTING HIRED

Wonderfully intense

Candidates interested in pursuing opportunities at Katzenbach Partners can “expect a friendly atmosphere, but a rigorous process.” Respondents insist that, despite how “intense” the process is, “people come out of it enjoying the experience.” A senior associate remarks, “I’ve done hundreds of interviews by now, and I can confidently say that I’ve received a lot of wonderful feedback from candidates (even unsuccessful ones) about how wonderful our interviewing process was.” It probably helps that there’s no need to wait in agony for a verdict, since “candidates are notified of decisions within a couple days.”

There are “no tests” and “no gimmicks,” but “getting hired is tough.” Qualified applicants typically go through two rounds of interviews, with the first being on campus or over the phone, and the second in one of the firm’s offices. Through the course of the process, it’s not unusual to have as many as six interviews. On the plus side, notes one staffer, “By the time I was hired, I had already started working relationships with a number of people.” A newbie informs us that “people who do well in interviews usually exhibit a strong record of academic and extracurricular success, can be defined as entrepreneurial and intellectual, and are friendly and engaging.” We’re told that “interviews are often a mix of fit and case, with the cases being based on actual projects or the candidate’s experience (rather than traditional business cases).” One of these is a written case, in which candidates are given “45 minutes to read and prepare notes, and 45 minutes to discuss with the interviewer.”

Quirky questions

An engagement manager advises, “Expect the unexpected in terms of questions. We like to ask counterintuitive questions for which candidates will typically not have a canned answer.” For example, recalls a recent hire, “I was asked the most bizarre case question I’ve ever been asked—the interviewer said, ‘I am of the opinion that lightbulbs do not give off light, but instead suck up darkness. Convince me otherwise.’” Other potential case questions might be along the lines of, “I have just invented the Babel fish (a la *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*). If I put it in my ear, I can understand whatever language is spoken to me, and my audience can understand my English, irrespective of their native tongue. Help me think about how I can maximize my profit from this invention. Please first describe for me the different potential markets for this product, and then estimate the size of each market, both in number of people and then in dollar value” or, “You are consulting to a highly profitable, family-owned, bakery cafe in Istanbul with six branches. The owner wants to grow it to 50 branches in five years. He has asked you to help him think through the most significant challenges he should expect to face.”

Former interns have positive things to say about their experience, noting that they acquired “real work experience” during their summers at the firm, and were “integrated with the team” like a “full-time consultant.” One senior associate reports, “I had no doubts about wanting to come back. That should speak volumes about my summer experience, right?”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

What’s in a title?

Insiders tell us that the “ideas and opinions of people at all levels are valued” in the “open,” “friendly,” “unbelievably supportive” and “entrepreneurial” culture at Katzenbach. “We care about each other, personally and professionally,” claims one source, and another adds that his fellow staffers “are not just colleagues, but also friends.” In this “encouraging” environment, a partner shares, “if you have an idea and can make a case for it, people will support you.” In fact, there is “an expectation that all firm members, regardless of tenure or type of position, participate in different ways in contributing to the firm and creating value for our clients.” It helps that “no one has offices, which makes it very easy to talk to senior people.” And “no one has titles on their business cards to avoid a hierarchical feeling.” “It is just as important to create trusting relationships as to deliver great solutions,” insists a senior associate. “I can’t imagine a more inviting place to spend my day,” asserts this principal, who feels the “firm culture is the single most outstanding attribute of this firm.”

Plus, an associate reports, “individuals are encouraged to be themselves and to pursue interests outside of your job.” Shares an engagement manager, “I really feel I can be my own person here, rather than being forced into a mold of what exactly a management consultant should be like.” At the same time, there is an expectation of “excellence from all colleagues—consultants and those in supporting functions—and we consistently see this realized.” The work is “challenging” and “demanding,” we’re told, and the people are “creative,” “intensely smart” and “truly energized about solving difficult problems.” In a nutshell, remarks an associate, “our corporate culture is our secret weapon for delivering client impact while staying sane.”

“Great to be gay at Katzenbach”

A Texas-based staffer believes “there is a lot of diversity within such a small firm, which makes it easy to find people who share your interests, and others who can expose you to new things.” As this manager describes it, “We have an unusually large number of singers, musicians, writers and other artists in the firm.” Plus, Katzenbach has a “very open and tolerant culture,” and “people of all races and backgrounds in significant leadership roles.” A principal echoes, “We don’t have any minority representation at the partnership level, but at every other level we have an interesting mix of outstanding consultants from a variety of ethnic, religious, racial and geographic backgrounds.”

A consultant adds, “I’ve been out of the closet since day one here, and Katzenbach is the most open and supportive environment for GLBT employees I’ve ever encountered in my career.” Another GLBT staffer comments, “It is great to be gay at Katzenbach.” We’re also told the firm has funded “dinners for gay and lesbian members to get together,” and “participates in the Out for Undergraduate Business Conference,” despite being “one-tenth of the size of the next smallest firm.” In addition, Katzenbach has “hosted gay and lesbian recruiting events on several campuses.” Others add lightheartedly, “Sometimes it seems like everyone at Katzenbach is gay,” and “I can think of the complete cast of *Queer As Folk* having equivalents in our firm.”

As for gender diversity, “the ratio of women to men at Katzenbach is higher than most consulting firms,” reports a senior associate.” It is even higher for the engagement manager and principal levels.” A longtimer agrees, “As a woman, I love it here. There is no lack of strong women in the firm, and never once have I felt that my opportunities have been limited or even affected because of my gender.” Still, qualifies another, “We could do a lot more in terms of mentoring and support for women, given how rare senior advancement is in our industry (and our firm).” But another insists, “There are a ton of women here, and they’re really supportive for younger women entering the firm. It honestly feels like a bit of a nonissue, though—just because we feel so well represented.”

Unpredictable hours

As for schedules, time spent at work varies widely, with staffers reporting anywhere from 40- to 80-hour weeks. In fact, one associate claims his schedule “fluctuates from less than 40 to more than 80.” Or, as another puts it, “If I’ve learned one thing thus far, it’s that nothing in consulting is average. There is no average assignment length just as there is no average assignment or average day!”

Perhaps the one constant in terms of scheduling is that “managers often give you the flexibility to structure your work independently, so you can work from home or leave to have dinner with friends if you have to work late.” A senior associate remarks, “I have found the firm really supportive of flexibility. If I have a light day, I make a point of taking my dog to the park, or sometimes I work from home in the morning. I really value that flexibility.” A principal agrees that the firm “focuses more on quality of work output and less on raw number of hours.” As a result, he adds, “if you can overdeliver for your client and still get home for dinner with your family, more power to you.” Besides which, says a senior source who is content with 60-hour weeks, “working means spending time with other Katzenbachers, and I can think of a lot of worse ways to spend my time! As long as I am having fun, I am happy.”

“An A for effort”

“Work/life balance is something the firm cares about and tries to protect,” and Katzenbach “encourages an open discussion” about the topic. So, although the “ability to balance depends very much on the client you are working with,” it’s also the case

that, “even for the more difficult clients, Katzenbach teams do tend to push back when client needs hurt work/life balance,” a senior associate explains. At one point, a team “even instituted a points system to reward associates for not working late or on weekends.” In fact, observes an experienced staffer, “if someone puts his foot down, the firm will usually accommodate, to the point of being a bit of a pushover sometimes.” Plus, adds a senior associate, “the firm virtually insists that you take your entire four weeks of vacation every year.”

Although Katzenbach “gets an A for effort in the work/life dimension,” it’s also just a fact of life that “the structural constraints of client work (and client expectations) mean that we’re still struggling to live up to the vision.” Or, as an associate puts it, “There is always a ton of work to do, and while we have the freedom to work the way that works best for us, that often means late nights and some weekends due to sheer volume.”

Supportive supervisors

Comments a senior source, “My manager always reminds me to make time for myself and keep things in perspective.” By and large, supervisors earn top marks at the firm for making “a lot of effort to provide opportunities for growth and development.” A new hire beams, “I have had great mentoring relationships with my senior leaders. They have spent a lot of their time teaching me the consulting skills I need to be successful, but also getting to know me as a person and offering their advice. Many of my former managers have now become mentors and friends who are strong advocates for my personal development, either inside the firm or when I choose to move on to something different.”

Love learning on the job

“The opportunities to learn through an apprenticeship model are great,” affirms an associate. “You are allowed and encouraged to take on stretch roles from day one.” A senior associate agrees, “We’re definitely based on the apprenticeship model, with most of training coming in the form of informal mentorship on project teams.” In addition, “feedback goes both ways, both up and down, so as an associate there is an expectation that you can help your managers develop as well.” Most respondents agree that the “on-the-job training is outstanding” and “second to none,” and that it “makes for a much more dynamic learning experience.” Still, some warn that associates “must seek out their mentors by creating their own relationships,” which is “sometimes difficult.”

But all agree that client exposure comes early. A newbie states, “For one of my first projects, I often found myself meeting with 15 senior leaders at our client’s offices and I would be expected to facilitate breakout sessions and contribute to discussion (in addition to doing other tasks like setting up PowerPoint, making sure we’re on time, etc.). It was mind-blowing that I could have so much responsibility in my first job out of school.” And a busy senior associate echoes, “I’m 27 years old and I have weekly meetings with the CEO of my client. I think that’s pretty incredible.” “People get to play manager roles at Katzenbach significantly earlier in their careers than they would at other firms, which is great,” adds this associate. “It also means that the firm has to pay a lot of attention to making sure that we’re developing managers properly.” Along those lines, notes a Houston-based consultant, “as we grow, our firm is becoming a lot more rigorous about management standards, which is a great thing.”

Ramping up formal training

A respondent tells us Katzenbach has “robust training offerings at all levels, which cover both hard skills (strategy, problem solving, etc.) and soft skills (influencing, how to be a distinctive leader in the firm).” A colleague adds that there is “a weeklong crash course to start out with,” and the “official training is heavily rooted in real casework and hands-on activities.”

On the other end of the satisfaction spectrum, some staffers report that they “don’t feel like [formal training] is sufficient,” that it is “subpar compared to our competitors” and “isn’t very well thought out sometimes.” Explains a New York-based associate, “Our official training is a work in progress. It is often informal and interactive. Two months ago, we spent a day at an improv theater working with comedians to learn meeting facilitation, which was fun and much better than staring at presentations all day.” A senior colleague agrees that “some of the trainings have been excellent and others have been less so,” but adds that “the effort is really promising as we increase in scale.” A partner continues, “We’ve significantly increased our investment in formal training, up more than 100 percent over the past 24 months. We’re increasingly investing in training for seniors (principals and

partners) as well as for consultants earlier in their careers.” In particular, the firm “has rolled out a new training program for senior associates,” which covers “interesting topics and a good mix of hands-on modules and classroom [activities].”

Move up on your own time

Sufficient training or no, rising within the ranks isn’t necessarily stressful: Insiders insist, “We are not up or out!” noting that “we give people the time they need to develop.” An engagement manager explains, “Advancement is driven by individual capabilities and opportunities, which really helps people carve their own paths at their own pace. It’s one of the best things about working here—we don’t feel like we’re all in lockstep progression.” An associate adds that, after promotion from associate to senior associate, “it can take two to four years to be promoted to engagement manager.” As others describe it, “engagement manager to principal promotions are also highly variable,” taking from one to five years, and “partner promotions are probably the most selective, going at a rate of none to one partner per year in recent years.”

Distant travel just brings you closer

Whatever one’s level at the firm, “this is consulting” and “you should expect to travel for work at some point.” But consistent travel is not a given. “Some offices have more local clients, so consultants in those offices do not necessarily travel much,” explains an associate in Texas. An engagement manager in New York agrees, “We travel, but only when it makes sense. There’s a lot of variability and often a lot of flexibility in how much time we spend on site with our clients.” Most staffers who are on the road consistently return to their home office on Fridays, or can choose to “fly guests in or travel to a location of your choice for the weekend.”

Many respondents feel “travel only adds to [their] work life.” “It brings me closer to my team, and allows me to see the rest of my cohorts who are based in other offices,” explains an associate. Another agrees, “Personally, the opportunity to work across offices and geographies makes me feel part of the broader firm, rather than just one office.” Another new hire comments, “I think I have had the strongest connections with my project teams and my clients on traveling projects. We find ways to make the experiences fun (for example, I had one of my review conversations over a beer on the top of the space needle in Seattle; on the same project, we chartered a sailboat for a sunset cruise).”

It does help, a junior source agrees, that Katzenbach “does a good job making the sacrifices we do have to make more palatable (making compromises with travel, for example, to lessen the burden of being away for four days each and every week).” An engagement manager adds, “We’re very supportive of ways that people make travel more sustainable for themselves, e.g., getting corporate apartments and a car in Houston, as opposed to staying at a hotel.” Staffers report that “there’s a good per diem for food,” and “you generally fly home Thursday night with the same cash in your pocket that you flew out with on Monday morning.” But “if you’ve traveled a lot and don’t want to travel again, the firm will make an effort to present you with alternatives, at least for a while,” an insider notes.

Ease the tension with a therapeutic massage

Remarks a new hire, “The firm goes out of its way to recognize hard work and make sure that long hours don’t go unnoticed,” and most staffers agree that compensation is competitive. That said, some clarify that just how competitive salary is does vary by level. A partner explains that salaries are “high for undergrads, competitive with top-rated firms but not looking to exceed for MBAs, strong for new project managers, but not as high as some firms for the most senior outside hires.”

The firm also offers “generous” profit sharing, which goes into a 401(k) account. A longtimer explains that the “eligibility requirements are minimal (you must work 500 hours in the calendar year and be a full-time, active employee on the last day of the year), and the contribution is 100 percent vested as soon as the transmission hits our individual ING accounts.” A colleague reports that “the amount of profit sharing is based on base salary earned, and can range anywhere from 3 percent to 15 percent,” but it is “surprisingly robust.” There are also “excellent benefits overall, for everything from vision care to therapeutic massage and a flexible vacation policy.” The firm also assists “foreign nationals in visa and green card issues.” New parents will appreciate that the parental policy allows “mothers to take 12 weeks of 100 percent paid leave,” in addition to the “12 weeks of

unpaid FMLA.” Plus, a new “adoption assistance policy gives time off to parents who adopt,” along with “financial reimbursement for costs related to the adoption as well.”

Head off on a helicopter with a buddy

At Katzenbach Partners, “perks abound.” There is a buddy program, in which a mentor and mentee get “\$100 a month” to spend “however you’d like,” including on “massages” or “helicopter rides.” “It’s fantastic!” raves one enthusiastic participant. There are also free lunches on Fridays at all firm locations, and specific buildings may have their own unique perks as well. In Houston, for example, there is the “Odwalla fridge, a fridge stocked (and refilled often) entirely with Odwalla fruit beverages,” in addition to “fresh fruit delivered weekly.” The Chicago office “has a putting green in the corner.”

Office space is “open, well lit and well designed,” and although “no one has an office, not even the partners,” there are “phone booths and conference rooms for when we need privacy.” By and large, “the offices in our different geographies are made to look similar.” Observes a New York-based associate, “I feel at home when I go visit Houston and Chicago, not just because I know many of the people, but also because there are the same plants, etc.”

In terms of company events, these include a monthly program known as “Kazenbach on the Town” where the entire office is invited to participate in activities like going to a comedy club, attending local sports events, cooking classes, pottery making, apple picking and more.

Committed to the community

What better way to celebrate Katzenbach Partners’ birthday than by having the “entire firm shut down for a day in each of the offices to participate in a community-building activity?” In general, “there are many nonprofit initiatives that the firm actively encourages and supports financially.” One longtimer reports enthusiastically, “Since joining Katzenbach, my community involvement has increased by at least 300 percent—for real. And I was really involved before!” And another notes, “At times it seems like we are almost doing too much.” The firm’s nonprofit advisory board “represents a really thoughtful and effective means of guiding our nonprofit consulting engagements.” A recent hire chimes in, “Associates are also encouraged to use nonprofit projects as ways to develop their consulting skills and to really add value to organizations in a meaningful and low-cost way.” Plus, a “green gurus program focuses on making the firm green and keeping us socially responsible in that regard.”

“Individuals with an interest or passion” are encouraged to pursue their own volunteer projects. One dedicated recent hire shares, “I’ve been working on bringing the model of a high-profile education nonprofit to my native country, Turkey, in the last five months. The firm has not only opened an expense account to help me, but also is mentoring me at the partner level on everything from building a budget to creating a pitch deck for different stakeholders.”

Towers Perrin

One Stamford Plaza
263 Tresser Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06901
Phone: (203) 326-5400
Fax: (203) 326-5499
www.towersperrin.com

LOCATIONS

Stamford, CT (World HQ)

Offices and alliance partner locations in the US, Bermuda, Canada, Europe, Asia, Latin America, South Africa and New Zealand

PRACTICE AREAS

Actuarial Services
Change Implementation & Communication
Employee Benefits
Enterprise Risk Management
HR Function Effectiveness, Design & Implementation
HR Service Delivery & Technology
Insurance & Financial Services
Mergers, Acquisitions & Restructuring
Organization & Employee Research
Reinsurance Services

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman & CEO: Mark V. Mactas
2008 Employees: 6,232
2007 Employees: 5,400
2007 Sales: \$1.63 billion
2006 Sales: \$1.42 billion



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Gold standard for HR consultancies"
- "Lost its mojo"
- "Smart, creative, good people"
- "Specialized for actuarial work"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#3 – Human Resources Consulting

UPPERS

- "Respectful and considerate"
- Growing steadily

DOWNERS

- "There's a gap in the middle talent level"
- Contributions often go unnoticed due to an insular workforce

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

careers.towersperrin.com

THE SCOOP

HR and beyond

Towers Perrin is a global professional services firm, offering human resources and benefits consulting, reinsurance and financial risk management services through offices and alliance partners in the United States and Bermuda, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Asia, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. The firm's HR consulting practice aims to help employers manage their staff in the areas of benefits, compensation, employee research and change management, among others. Its reinsurance business provides reinsurance strategy and program review, claims management and program administration, catastrophe exposure management, market security consulting, and contract negotiation and placement. Financial risk management services are handled by the company's Tillinghast business, which offers consulting, actuarial services and software solutions to insurance and financial services companies. Tillinghast also advises clients on risk financing and self insurance.

Erecting Towers

Established in Philadelphia as Towers, Perrin, Forster & Crosby in 1934, the company's initial focus was on life insurance and reinsurance. Offices in Chicago and New York followed in the 1940s, and the life insurance division became the pension division, an obvious focus for the firm considering H. Walter Forster, one of its founders, had developed the first-ever pension plan for Union Carbide, in 1916. The division began publishing the *TPF&C Pension Tax Manual*, now a standard reference (and a rollicking good bedtime story, to boot) on pension tax law for the IRS.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the firm branched out overseas, opening offices in Montreal, Brussels and London. It was in the 1960s, as well, that it began establishing a niche in HR consulting. Over the following decades, the company grew both internally and through acquisition, taking on Tillinghast in a 1986 merger. The following year, Towers Perrin was declared the "umbrella name" for all businesses.

Hands across the water

Towers Perrin extends its global reach through an alliance network of more than 15 entities. The most recent addition to the network is Greco International, a Vienna-based actuarial and benefits consulting firm, which partnered up in June 2006. Greco serves clients in Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia. The partnership is significant for granting Towers Perrin greater access to the Central European market. Dovetailing with this were two additional June 2006 alliances with HRK Partners and Trio Management, both Polish HR consultancies. Other alliance partners are located elsewhere in Europe, as well as in the Americas, Asia and other parts of the world.

Research reinforcements

The firm has also enhanced its business over the years by acquiring smaller companies, the most recent being the March 2007 purchase of ISR, a Chicago-based employee research and consulting firm. ISR boasts a database of employee and leadership opinion surveys spanning more than 35 million employees in over 100 countries. In February 2007, Towers Perrin took over MGMCM, Inc., a provider of compensation surveys and advisory services for the financial sector. Towers Perrin believes the two companies will enhance its existing research capabilities.

You scratch my back ...

Aside from, but parallel to, its acquisitions and partnerships, Towers Perrin has been engaged with business and technology solutions company EDS since 2005 in a joint venture known as ExcellerateHRO. The collaborative business combines Towers Perrin's administrative solutions with EDS' payroll and HR outsourcing services. This dual service arrangement allows clients to align their HR and business objectives with minimal loss of time and money investments.

Following an agreement signed in March 2007 with employee screener HireRight, ExcellerateHRO expanded into on-demand employment background and drug screening, taking the “joint” out of joint venture once and for all.

Better consulting through technology

On the electronic front, Towers Perrin develops and releases software solutions for use by clients or other purchasers. In October 2007, the company introduced RiskAgility, a financial modeling software framework targeted at insurance companies. The software is designed to facilitate fast, accurate pricing, financial reporting and capital management work. One year prior, in October 2006, Tillinghast—the firm’s financial risk management group—introduced TAS-MoSes, an actuarial software application for use on the company’s preexisting MoSes platform. TAS-MoSes provides comprehensive actuarial analysis and reporting, and can be used in conjunction with product development, pricing, valuation, cash flow testing, liability and asset/liability modeling.

Gold star

In September 2007, Tillinghast was named Best Consultancy of the Year by *Reactions* magazine, a monthly publication that covers the insurance and reinsurance industries. It was selected to receive the honor based on the polling results from thousands of risk managers, brokers, reinsurance/insurance managers, directors and CEOs in the industry. Tillinghast was also singled out for the award in 2005 and 2004.

Learn by asking

To stay on top of its game, Towers Perrin conducts multiple annual research studies and surveys that track and identify hot topics in the HR world. Its “2008 Global Compensation Planning Report,” released in January 2008, reviewed the projected salary movements and key economic indicators of more than 4,000 companies in 60 countries. The report points to continuing moderate salary growth in most countries, contrary to widespread expectations of sluggish economic growth. According to the report, U.S. salaries are expected to increase an average of 3.9 percent across all employee levels over the course of 2008.

In October 2007, the firm released the Global Workforce Study, proclaiming it the largest ever study of its kind, with almost 90,000 workers polled. The study calculated the level of employee engagement with their employers, and the ramifications of that engagement (or lack thereof) on performance, retention and other factors.

GETTING HIRED

Know what fits

On its careers page, Towers Perrin identifies ideal candidates as those excited by an environment full of challenge, opportunity and diverse perspectives. The firm states that, upon finding such people, it works to “engage, motivate and retain” them. To facilitate its search, Towers recruits at more than 50 colleges and universities in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. Its web site offers a schedule of upcoming campus visits, although it encourages interested parties at schools outside the list of slated stops to apply online. Students and experienced candidates alike can search Towers Perrin’s database of positions, which can be narrowed down by location.

A source in Philadelphia describes the hiring process, saying “it included several individual phone interviews, followed by one day of on-site face-to-face interviews. The phone interviews intended to qualify my experience and potential placement within the service offerings. The face-to-face interviews were conducted to ensure I was a good fit within the organization.” Getting hired doesn’t involve the glamour or intensity that some would expect. A consultant warns, “One must not rely too heavily upon the recruiting or human resource functions, or you will be disappointed. It’s the talented professionals that drove my interest then, as it does now.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Human assets

The firm has a wealth of strong employees that leads to a pleasant, productive culture. According to an insider, “The working environment is one that promotes mutual respect at all levels when working on client engagements. The talent within is quite substantial.” The respondent finds the firm lacking in support for that talent however, noting, “The core operations or infrastructure leaves a great deal to be desired. With a great need of improvement for efficient and effective CRM, knowledge management, resourcing and financial, the list goes on. This is a result of long-term investment neglect. While there is some effort to address a portion of the infrastructure needs, the full picture does not seem to be in focus. At least not in the short term.”

The resources allocated to training tend to satisfy, however. One source finds, “We have excellent national and local training specific to our technical skills, professional skills or business skills. In addition, we have a buddy system for new hires, to provide mentoring in the first few years. After this time, it is quite easy to get mentoring from other, more senior people.”

The rewards of hard work

Expectations of pay and other benefits can be hard to meet. A source says, “The salary packages reflect limited travel model assumptions, which is not accurate and is below competitive ranges. The vacation package is not impressive, either.” Not everyone views travel as a reason for greater compensation, though. “Travel is not excessive with my client mixture, so when I get to travel for client work or training, I generally enjoy it,” a consultant shares. For those willing to stick with it, an insider advises, “long-term pension is definitely something to consider if you are willing to invest for the vesting period.”

Capgemini

623 Fifth Avenue, 33rd Floor
New York, NY 10022
Phone: (212) 314-8000
Fax: (212) 314-8001
www.us.capgemini.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (US HQ)

Paris (HQ)

Offices in 35 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Consulting Services

Finance & Employee Transformation • Supply Chain •
Transformation Consulting

Local Professional Services

Outsourcing Services

Applications Outsourcing • Business Process Outsourcing
• Infrastructure Management • Transformational
Outsourcing

Technology Services

Agent Technology • Application Development & Integration
• Business Intelligence • Customer Relationship
Management • Infrastructure & Security • IT
Transformation: Strategy & Architecture • Mobile
Technology • Open Source • Oracle • Portals • Radio
Frequency Identification • SAP

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company

Ticker Symbol: CAP.PA (Paris Bourse)

Chairman: Serge Kampf

CEO: Paul Hermelin

2008 Employees: 83,000

2007 Employees: 78,000

2007 Revenue: €8.7 billion

2006 Revenue: €7.7 billion



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Friendlier, approachable"
- "Confusing value proposition"
- "International"
- "Imploding"

UPPERS

- "The opportunity at lower levels to drive thought leadership is readily available and encouraged"
- Strong sense of community
- "The ability to expense most of your living costs during the week"

DOWNERS

- Salary is lower than that of competitors
- "Small practice, so the ability to learn diminishes after a while"
- "Poor market position of the firm's brand"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.us.capgemini.com/careers

THE SCOOP

It came from France

Serge Kampf began Capgemini in 1967 as an enterprise management and data processing company called Sogeti. Having weathered a series of acquisitions and name changes, the firm has been referring to itself as Capgemini since 2004. Today, its 83,000 employees provide consulting, technology and outsourcing, in addition to local professional services through its Sogeti subsidiary. Capgemini has offices in 35 countries on all six habitable continents, and in recent years has been particularly aggressive about expansion in India. Although the new millennium initially brought some very rocky times for the firm, the last few years have shown solid growth. *Forbes* ranked Capgemini 855th on its 2007 list of the top-2,000 corporations in the world, and ranked it 12th in software and services.

Capgemini breaks down its vital and rapidly growing outsourcing division into information technology and business process outsourcing. Its consulting arm focuses on customer relationship management, finance and employee transformation, global sourcing, operational research, supply chain and transformation consulting. The Sogeti subsidiary provides services in three areas: application, infrastructure and high-tech consulting. Sogeti's local professional services is another name for services geared toward midsized and smaller clients.

Bigger is not always better

In May 2000, Cap Gemini (as it was then known) made the major move of acquiring Ernst & Young Consulting. The optimism over tripling the size of its workforce soon deteriorated into the doldrums of revenue losses and layoffs. Around \$72 million was burned in the attempt to establish an identity for the new Cap Gemini Ernst & Young. Then-CFO William Bitan finally resigned after a \$24.6 million operating loss over the first half of 2004. His departure was hastened by predictions that the firm would show a profit over the period.

Going on a diet

With these setbacks, many industry analysts believed that the firm could only survive by being bought out. However, despite its propensity for acquiring other companies throughout its history, Cap Gemini Ernst & Young was not about to be acquired itself. Instead, it began trimming and refocusing, with the stated goal of "accountability, affordability and efficiency." As such, its health care consulting practice was sold to Accenture in April 2005 for \$175 million, although the firm kept its health care outsourcing and public-sector health clients. Its project and consulting lines were also heavily restructured.

Up, up and away

By 2005, Capgemini had returned to a profitable existence, and that trend has continued ever since. Annual net income rose 5.1 percent over the whole of 2007, and the operating margin was expected to rise from 7.4 percent to 8.5 percent in 2008. Outside sources have been keen on Capgemini's growth, too. Citigroup has said, "It seems that Capgemini has de-risked 2008," and rated the firm's stock a "buy." In January 2008, Standard & Poor's raised Capgemini to the investment-grade credit rating of BBB-. The only major crash at the party is the restructuring of a large contract with the British government, which Capgemini predicts will slow revenue growth to just 2 to 5 percent in 2008.

India calling

In recent years, Capgemini has gotten more attention for its outsourcing than for its other offerings. The 2007 *Black Book of Outsourcing* survey ranked it the No. 2 outsourcer in the world, jumping from the previous year's No. 15 ranking. The survey noted that Capgemini's "infrastructure management development initiatives are pleasing customers and elevating respect among competitors." Capgemini CEO Paul Hermelin claims that his firm has been able to do this largely by becoming a "hybrid animal," something between a Western and an Indian company. With a huge infusion of staff from the acquisition of Kanbay

International in December 2006, the firm far surpassed its employee goals in India for 2007, and plans to have 45,000 employees there by 2010. Citigroup predicts that this could raise gross margins by about 2.5 percent, which “would give [Capgemini] a strong cost differentiation against its local [Indian] peers.”

In fact, Capgemini has expanded operations in India so much that it’s begun to attract buyout attention from Indian firms. In 2007, rumors of buyouts by Infosys or Wipro were circulating widely. However, Hermelin has said “it doesn’t make any sense” for Indian firms to want to acquire his company, and both Infosys and Wipro have officially denied that they have been scoping Capgemini out. But rumors about other Indian firms and their eye for acquisition continue to thrive.

Capgemini’s offshoring operations go far beyond India, however. Its Rightshore[®] system of globally distributed delivery (which it says entails “having the right resources, in the right location, at the right cost”) spreads work from every discipline (consulting, technology and outsourcing) across onshore, nearshore and offshore locations. Capgemini has 2,200 employees in Poland, and is expanding rapidly in China, Morocco and Argentina as well. Its percentage of offshore work rose from 13 percent in 2006 to 24 percent in 2007, and the firm seems to have every intention of continuing along this trajectory in the coming years.

Tech treks

Capgemini made a number of high-tech moves in 2007. The one that caused the most waves, perhaps, was its entrance into the Google/Microsoft war by teaming up with Google to offer the Internet company’s package of office software (Google Apps) with its own desktop solutions package. However, showing that it wouldn’t play favorites, in February 2008, Capgemini acquired Software Architects, a company focused on Microsoft and IBM technology solutions—to the point of being named a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner.

In another tech move, in September 2007, Capgemini signed a five-year contract with NXP Semiconductors, the independent semiconductor company founded by Philips. The contract will cover end-to-end finance and accounting services, which include procure-to-pay and record-to-request.

Across the pond

Capgemini has also made some big deals close to its French headquarters. February 2008 saw the revision of a major contract with Schneider Electric (a French company involved with electrical distribution, automation and control) that had been originally signed in November 2004. The revision resets the boundaries of the contract, the production tariff terms and service specifications. Capgemini predicts that these revisions will create some slim losses in 2008, but will permit a decent operating margin for 2009 and beyond.

In April 2007, the firm won a contract with British retailer Matalan to run all of its core IT systems until 2013. Using its Rightshore system, services for Matalan will be distributed between the U.K., India and Poland. In addition, March 2007 marked Capgemini’s largest ever contract in the Netherlands, a €230 million deal with the Dutch Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management to provide server and data center services.

Optimistic smoke signals

Not all of the firm’s engagements deal so exclusively with technology issues, however. A recent, long-term project for British American Tobacco called on more traditional methods of strategy consulting. The tobacco company tasked Capgemini with reducing the complexity and expense of its entire supply chain. Focusing on the top-14 end markets for the company’s products, Capgemini redesigned the entire procurement process, including new budgeting, better strategic sourcing and tightly monitored performance tracking. Over time, British American Tobacco experienced a dramatic increase in its buying power. After tallying savings of £153 million in two years, the company was able to double its five-year savings target, set at the time it hired the firm, from £200 million to £400 million.

GETTING HIRED

Nothing out of the ordinary

Capgemini's hiring process should seem familiar to those in the consulting circuit, especially if they've previously interviewed with another consulting firm. The interview process is the "same as other firms," according to insiders, consisting of "one HR round, then a phone round with someone in the practice you are interviewing in, then three to five rounds all day in the office." For the in-office day, sources recommend being prepared for case studies (no surprises there), for which there are likely to be "two casing interviews," where "facilitation skills are important." In addition to skillful handling of the cases, interviewers are checking candidates for fit, and are likely to make behavioral assessments.

For those seeking a graduate position, the firm recruits at top universities throughout the country. A New York-based consultant tells us that, on the East Coast, "my firm recruits primarily at NYU, Wharton, Duke and Columbia," and a Californian points to "USC, UC Berkeley and Columbia, that I know of." In addition to the schools from which it recruits, interested parties can turn to Capgemini's web site to search open positions and to apply online.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

What do Capgemini and Kansas have in common?

Even though the Earth turned out to be spherical, insiders tell us that flat is the mantra that prevails at Capgemini—at least as far as hierarchy goes. Apparently, the firm has a "flat, approachable leadership," which fosters a culture that is not only "friendly," but "collaborative, at all levels." To ensure that remains the case, the firm places much emphasis on bringing in the right people.

A source states, "Capgemini excels at hiring people who are great to work with and to socialize with. It's more informal than the average consulting firm, with a very flat hierarchy." "Corporate culture is extremely strong," agrees a colleague, adding, "It's a very friendly place, and at least one thing that our sometimes-chaotic recruitment process seems to get right is employee attitude. Capgemini people seem to be more cooperative and helpful than at other firms I've been at, and there's a general recognition that the best way to get ahead as an individual is by working well in a team, rather than pulling others down." Part of that may result from a "rebound feeling," with some staffers sensing that "the bad times are past," and there is "an eagerness to build back up."

The flat structure also leads respondents to rate highly the relationships between staffers and superiors. Although some boast of a "great mentoring program," others praise the collaborative environment that "includes every level of consultant/manager interacting with every level of client."

The balancing act

The work/life balance issue at Capgemini seems to be a question either of choice, luck or something in between, depending on which consultants you talk to. One claims that "all consultants will have lifestyle gripes, but Capgemini people tend to believe we're better off in terms of hours, working style and balance than if we were at similar competitors." Another source says that "most people within my practice can [achieve balance] if they want to. I have been on uniquely intense projects that have required a lot more personal time than others." A staffer in San Jose, meanwhile, offers the following critique: "I've rarely had to work more than 50 hours a week. Fridays are always home office days, which often means at home, rather than just in your home city. Holidays could accrue a little faster, but they improve with length of service."

Air time

The expectations for travel at Capgemini "can be grueling" according to one West Coast insider, who claims to have "flown the equivalent of 10 circumnavigations of the equator in the past 12 months." Still, for every cloud someone will find a silver lining,

and one consultant admits that all the travel actually has some benefits. “Travel allows for focused work efforts during the workweek, eliminating the distractions of the home office.” However, there are firm-driven initiatives in some offices to cut down on the amount of time staffers spend away from home. “Some practices have regional models that reduce amount and distance,” says one source, whereas another lauds the fact that “consultants are staffed near their home location to minimize travel, whenever possible.” Still, for those considering a career in the industry, a Chicago-based respondent has some words of wisdom. Apparently, Capgemini’s travel requirements are “not excessive or minimal—if you are getting into consulting then you expect to travel, and to complain about it means that you should go in for industry and get out of consulting.” A persistent travel gripe among staff, meanwhile, is that, “unfortunately, Capgemini provides very little travel support, such as expensed lunch when away from home, access to airport launch programs, travel and logistics support, business class on long-haul flights, etc.” That, says the source, is “a major deficiency at Capgemini!”

Take it to the bank

Capgemini consultants have a sneaky feeling that they’re not being paid as much as competitors at rival firms. One staffer even goes as far as to say that “the No.1 issue at Capgemini is that several top people have left because of poor pay. Only the great culture can keep people.” Others do list some additional benefits: “It’s basically accepted that you make personal calls on your corporate plan mobile,” says one source. “There’s theoretically a limit, but I have never hit it ... despite many calls to other countries.” A colleague appreciates the availability of “low/no-cost events around the area (i.e., museum passes, baseball tickets, happy hours).” Another consultant lists the “good mix of strategy and project management in the type of projects we do” as a real perk, along with “a lot of client interface and an opportunity to grow in business development and content creation, if we want to.” Not exactly a corporate sports car and massive expense account, but reason enough to keep showing up, at least.

Food for thought

Given the collaborative nature of the firm, it’s not surprising that Capgemini offers a mixture of formal and on-the-job training—efforts that are warmly received by staff. “Each employee is given the opportunity to attend formal training programs to hone his/her skills in personal areas of choice,” an insider explains. Also, the firm operates a mentor program that “allows each employee to discuss his development path and action plans to further his career, with an assigned mentor.” A colleague on the West Coast, meanwhile, rates a certain overseas experience highly, although there is a suspicion that gustatory pleasures rank as highly as any concern for the subject matter. “The best training is at a Chateau in France,” he comments. “The training quality is top notch, as is the opportunity to network with international colleagues over top-notch food and wine on the company dime.” A primary concern about training, however, is the difficulty of getting into some of the courses. According to one staffer, there is “limited or no access to some of the top Harvard online classes, or to other top external classes.”

Going forward

Despite its flatness, or perhaps because of it, getting up the ladder at Capgemini has two main features. The first is that advancement is possible for any who work for it—we’re told that the firm is “truly a meritocracy, where people are rewarded for excelling, while most who do not excel find that consulting is not the industry for them and move on to a better fit.” The flip side of the flat culture is that, should a consultant happen to find himself excelling in his current role but unwilling to take on more responsibility, that’s fine too. “It is not up or out,” sources report, “and consultants usually advance once every two to three years based on utilization and engagement performance ratings, as well as on differentiators among peers demonstrated through a business case at roundtables done at the end of the year.”

Diversity—not traditional

Capgemini scores highly across the board in terms of diversity. On the male-female balance, one source observes, “not only is our firm made up of a large proportion of women, but there are several opportunities to promote women in business within the community.” A colleague adds the caveat that “we do not have enough women in senior leadership.” Commenting on the diversity issue as a whole, meanwhile, one New Yorker praises Capgemini’s “highly diverse workforce,” but points out that it’s

Capgemini

not diverse “in the traditional sense.” By “traditional” it would appear that he means diversity among Americans, as he comments that, although he’s “not sure about [numbers of] gays/lesbians, African-Americans, etc.,” the firm is “full of Germans, French, Indians, etc.”

Capping it off

Capgemini encourages its staff to get involved in their community, and will, on occasion, provide the cash to back this up. In addition to “a dedicated committee that is focused on giving back to the community (i.e., donating time and items to clothing/food drives, fixing up inner-city schools, AIDS walks, breast cancer walks, etc.),” the company has firm ties to several leading charities. Indeed, one consultant tells us the firm is “strongly involved with Junior Achievement and Habitat for Humanity.” Furthermore, “eager employees can request grants for charitable projects—and usually get them.”

Gartner, Inc.

56 Top Gallant Road
 Stamford, CT 06902
 Phone: (203) 964-0096
www.gartner.com

LOCATIONS

Stamford, CT (Global HQ)
 Operations in 80 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Gartner Consulting

Architecture & Critical Technologies
 Benchmarking
 Business Consulting
 Comparative Analytics
 Cost Optimization
 Program Management
 Sourcing

Gartner Events

Gartner Executive Programs

Gartner Research

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: IT (NYSE)
CEO: Eugene Hall
2008 Employees: 4,000
2007 Employees: 3,800
2007 Revenue: \$1.19 billion
2006 Revenue: \$1.06 billion



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Know it all"
- "IT guys creating reports"
- "Specialized, best in class"
- "Hard to distinguish from analyst side"

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#20 – Interaction with Clients

UPPERS

- "Access to the enormous brain trust"
- "Autonomy and flexibility"
- Prestigious brand

DOWNERS

- "Turnover in the leadership"
- Poorly articulated criteria for promotion
- "Too much focus on short-term results"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Visit the Careers section of the firm's web site

THE SCOOP

The ticker says it all

If you have any doubts about Gartner's specialty, just look at its stock ticker symbol: IT. Specifically, the firm helps clients research, analyze and interpret how information technology affects their industry and the role they play therein. Through all of its various arms, Gartner serves around 60,000 clients in 10,000 organizations. Its 4,000-strong staff, with 1,250 research analysts and consultants, are based in 75 countries around the world. The firm provides services to 65 percent of the Fortune 1000 and 80 percent of the Global 500. Every year, its pages of original research number in the tens of thousands, and it provides answers to 200,000 questions from clients.

Gartner's web site can look more like a news and analysis site than that of a consulting firm, offering breakdowns of the latest IT trends, as well as blogs and podcasts. Gartner Consulting's services can be hard to separate from those of the firm's other divisions, but the firm actively promotes synergy among its various divisions. The consulting arm officially offers business consulting, comparative analytics, program management, architecture and critical technologies, and sourcing. Its main industries include the public sector, banking and financial services, utilities, health care, and telecom and media. In February 2008, Per Anders Warn took over leadership of the consulting arm from Bob Patton. Prior to his promotion, Warn had stood as head of the firm's global core consulting team.

Plunging into the core

Gartner divides its main clients into three categories: the IT workforce and its leaders, technology vendors and technology investors. The firm helps the IT workforce and its leaders coordinate tech needs for their own clients, in addition to helping them learn about the specific capabilities of competitors. Gartner tries to show not only what to buy, but how to buy it and how to use it to maximize results. For technology vendors, the firm helps clients deal with trends and learn more about their customers. Technology investors get complete access to Gartner Core Research for analyses of the latest technology, in addition to the forecasting database of Gartner Dataquest.

The bedrock of Gartner is its core research division. In fact, Gartner openly calls this division "the foundation of most client relationships." Clients can access core research in two ways: reference and advisor. Reference lets clients use features such as Gartner Fellows (the best and brightest within the organization), company blogs and the data provided by Magic Quadrants (a process to determine the relative position of every vendor in the market) and "hype cycles" (designed to show how technologies are maturing). In addition to the privileges of reference, those clients choosing advisor will receive the personalized service of core research analysts.

Under the hood

To get a feel for how Gartner Consulting handles client engagements, here are several examples. A major financial services firm wanted to offer higher service quality while lowering the costs of IT delivery, in addition to using application management and worldwide sourcing to improve efficiency. It also wanted to further the maturity of key processes so that they would be more flexible, quick and cost-effective. Gartner decided to revamp the company's sourcing strategy, create a project management office to keep risks and costs as low as possible, and develop better management for application portfolios. The firm claims that these changes resulted in \$32 million in savings for the client.

Another Fortune 500 financial services firm wanted a better strategy for global IT transformation, productivity and efficiency, as well as a new operating model for its IT organization. Gartner delineated which areas it felt were key to improving efficiency, and gave the client concrete performance targets. It also developed cost benchmarking, reviewed consolidation strategies, assessed the client's IT processes and used price benchmarking to create a global IT service catalog. The firm claims that the client saved over \$100 million in two years, in addition to improving service, efficiency, process maturity and business credibility.

Event horizon

Gartner hosts so many events for the IT industry that it created a stand-alone division for the group responsible for those events. In 2007, the firm held 78 conferences around the world, attended by roughly 44,000 executives and IT providers. Led by Gartner analysts, the conferences feature technology showcases, peer exchange workshops, analyst one-on-one meetings, consulting diagnostic workshops and keynote addresses from prominent IT professionals. However, the events practice lost some of its mojo recently, with the sale of the Vision Events portfolio in February 2008. Vision Events was focused on bringing together technology vendors and buyers, and accounted for \$21 million of revenue in 2007.

Membership has its privileges

Gartner executive programs are membership organizations that offer extremely personalized services, knowledge-sharing opportunities among executives, and support and insight for CIO-level issues. Some of the practice's programs offer CIO peer exchange, executive training and development, and strategies for human capital management. Approximately 3,700 CIOs and other IT leaders are current members.

Out of the Big Blue

Gartner's origins go back to its namesake, Gideon Gartner, a technology securities analyst and former IBM staffer. He founded the firm in 1979 to provide companies with advice on buying and selling IT. The firm's early reputation was built upon its founder's connections to IBM. It went public in 1986, when *BusinessWeek* rated it one of the best small companies in the country. The British advertising company Saatchi & Saatchi bought Gartner in 1988, but Gideon wrested control back in 1990 via a leveraged buyout. When the tech boom of the 1990s hit, Gartner went along for the ride, going public yet again in 1993. Founder Gartner sold all of his shares and now has no official connections to the firm. Gartner switched from Nasdaq to the New York Stock Exchange in 1998.

The firm has been going strong over the past few years, with revenue increasing 12 percent in 2007 to \$1.19 billion. The consulting division did not keep pace with that growth rate, however, with its revenue increasing only 6 percent to \$325 million—partly due to the company exiting its relatively minor consulting operations in the Asia Pacific region that year. The exit led to a drop in billable consultants from 518 to 472. A Gartner insider told *Computerworld* at the time of the announcement that the move had to do with size and competition: "It's all down to a size issue, really. To compete with some of the other IT services companies out there you need to have a fair sized team and we only have a small team in this region. We would have to invest a hell of a lot more people and resources, which we just don't have."

Another type of hardware

Each year, the firm gives out the Gartner CRM Excellence Awards to companies it feels have developed the best customer relationship management strategies. During the last few years, Gartner has sought to expand the success of the awards into ceremonies for High Performance Workplace Excellence Awards and Business Intelligence Excellence Awards.

The firm also wins occasional awards of its own. For instance, in both 2007 and 2008, it was ranked among the best 25 places to work in the Netherlands by the Great Place to Work Institute.

GETTING HIRED

Skiping school

Gartner generally steers away from hiring fresh graduates. An insider says, "We do very little MBA recruiting and no undergrad recruiting. Last year, we recruited at NYU and Columbia." Other respondents mention UC Davis, although "most" hires, says a source, "are experienced." Typically, applicants go through a long process—one insider describes it as "sloooowwww." An

associate director gives further details: “A person is screened by HR, then invited in for an intensive, half-day series of interviews with the hiring manager and various peers. The candidate is then required to make a presentation to the same group of interviewers on a business case.” The case study is particularly important. A source reveals, “A candidate’s case study requires one to review a domain-specific client situation/problem (e.g., the need for IT infrastructure consolidation in a given government agency), then develop and present a proposal briefing explaining how Gartner will approach solving the problem(s).”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Total realism

Reviews of the culture at Gartner reflect the expected dynamics of a large company and a large culture—they’re mixed. Those giving out high marks tend to praise the competent people and the high standards for excellence. One insider, for example, describes the firm as “very energetic, extremely intellectual, collaborative and driven.” Another gushes that it is a “very open, educated and family-like atmosphere. A real place to learn and succeed.” Other sources aren’t so sure, however. A respondent feels the firm is “very focused on billable time,” while another finds it “noncommunicative and arcane.” An insider in San Francisco believes the firm tends to “manage by numbers,” solely focusing on the client. Of course, a key factor is revealed when a vice president weighs in, saying, “Gartner Consulting is a collection of cultures, rather than one culture.”

Fitting it all in

The work/life balance at the firm is satisfactory to most. A consultant in Arlington says, “I find that I’m able to take care of my family commitments because of the flexibility afforded to me by my firm. I definitely end up working later at night quite frequently, but the ability to be with my family between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. is important to me.” A source in California agrees, “I have been able to schedule my vacations and my recreation around client commitments. This is a challenge, but my colleagues understand the importance of fitting this in. I am also able to work from my home office to balance client travel commitments.” One insider believes it’s a matter of commitment, saying, “If you are ambitious, your workload will be higher. There are definitely people who maintain a lower workload and are content to take a little longer to progress.” A respondent with a longer tenure sees things as shifting for the worse. “We seem to be moving toward a culture where, if you are not physically present, you’re not working.” An associate consultant describes it as “tough,” but adds, “you learn to cope.”

Fortunately, the firm’s work does not lead to extensive travel. A source points out, “Our projects tend to be higher on the food chain than typical technology implementation; therefore, travel is lighter. Depending upon your home office and specialty, travel could be frequent—but typically not five days a week.” A director in Washington, D.C., echoes this, saying, “Ability to travel is a requirement, but generally Gartner consultants travel much less than those at many other consulting firms.” The situation, already good, may be improving, according to an insider who says, “The firm is trying very hard to focus on specific cities where we can obtain critical mass. That allows us to staff people close to their home. As we grow our depth in certain areas, I expect people to have to travel less.”

Standard package

Gartner provides the usual bundle of benefits, but there is scant mention of the excursions and comfort perks seen with some other firms. One source notes that the “package is typical: health, dental, medical, etc.” The company also has programs for profit sharing and 401(k) matching. An insider in Washington, D.C., praises the “free parking,” and another in New York recalls there was a “gift from Tiffany’s when I had my first child.” Additionally, an associate director mentions that “all consultants get state-of-the-art mobile phone with e-mail and broadband modem capability.”

No train in the station

The company offers little in the way of formal training. What an employee ends up getting, according to one source, “is self-directed and largely unstructured.” A colleague agrees, “Everything is on your own initiative,” while another insider believes the company expects employees “to arrive with skills,” after which there is “no investment” to keep them current. A director in Sacramento explains, “Most of our training is on-the-job training; however, we do encourage our consultants to identify and pursue appropriate training that can further their capabilities each year.”

There are those, however, who see an advantage in the informal, hands-off approach. According to a consultant, “Our firm presents incredible opportunities for self-starters and leaders. It is not the firm individuals should choose if they want extensive training in how to become a consultant or in the methodologies we use beyond on-the-job training. This culture also allows individuals to remain so, contributing their talents where needed, as opposed to being trained to become a specific type of consultant representing a certain culture.”

Although there’s some variation, many respondents are dissatisfied with the promotion track. An insider feels it “can be hard to get promoted even when your performance justifies it, due to glut of those at the level above you.” Another says, “Promotions seem to be few and far between.” A consultant from San Francisco sounds off, “There appears to be no rhyme or reason behind the promotion process, and no clear-cut criteria that people can work within to get promoted. Ultimately, someone’s making the decisions, and I truly believe that they mean well and have some grand plan ... I’m just not sure what that plan may be, and I certainly don’t agree with it.” It may just be that evaluations are extremely rigid. A source explains, “Gartner Consulting annually rates its employees on a modified bell curve using a balanced scorecard approach. A small percentage of employees receive exemplary ratings.” Another puts it plainly, “People advance according to their abilities. It’s not driven by a particular schedule.”

Diversity a work in progress

Gartner isn’t wowing anyone with its diversity, though we’re told it is making efforts. One insider says, “Our firm has challenges recruiting women as compared to men. I am a constant voice for improvement in this area, as are other women in the firm. Our leadership does encourage and support advancement of women, but we could definitely improve in this area.” A director in Washington, D.C., sees the gender ratio as “fairly well balanced at the associate levels (consultant to associate director),” but finds that “most senior-level positions are filled by men.” Another source comments, “I have not observed any kind of discrimination or unequal treatment toward women, but there are relatively few in the managing partner ranks in my office.”

Minorities are also not particularly well represented. A senior director says there are “lots of Indian nationalities” and “lots of Asians on the West Coast,” but notices that the firm is “lacking outside of this diversity (i.e., African-Americans, Hispanics).” Gays and lesbians have perhaps fared better. A source reveals, “We have a few openly gay individuals, including in senior roles.” Another concurs that there are “lots of openly gay people in the organization. It is really a nonissue.”

Financial aid

Gartner doesn’t engage in many charitable activities, although it is willing to make monetary contributions. One insider lists off “in-kind charity matching, blood drives and other donations to local community groups.” Another has found that “they have a good matching gift program and they do encourage involvement, but not on a consistent basis.” A vice president gets more specific: “I sponsor an inner-city child by paying his tuition to a Catholic high school, and Gartner chips in half—a very nice touch on their part.”

Roland Berger Strategy Consultants

230 Park Avenue, Suite 112
New York, NY 10022
Phone: (212) 651-9660
Fax: (212) 756-8750
www.rolandberger.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (North American HQ)
Munich (Global HQ)
36 offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Development
Information Management
Marketing & Sales
Operations Strategy
Restructuring & Corporate Finance

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Burkhard Schwenker
2007 Employees: 2,000
2006 Employees: 1,700
2007 Revenue: €600 million
2006 Revenue: €555 million

UPPERS

- "A very flat hierarchy and considerable interaction with the partners"
- "Good pay"

DOWNERS

- "Often very difficult to understand the rationale behind some staffing or scheduling decisions"
- Operations are still a bit limited in the US

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Ms. Diane Greyerbiehl
Roland Berger Strategy Consultants
2401 West Big Beaver Road, Suite 500
Troy, MI 48084
Phone: (248) 729-5000
Fax: (248) 649-1794



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "International"
- "Overfocused on some markets and industries"
- "Growing in reputation"
- "Not well known in the US"

THE SCOOP

It all started with a one-man show

Founded in 1967 with a staff consisting of just Roland Berger himself, the aptly named Roland Berger Strategy Consultants is now one of the top-three consulting firms in Europe and among the top 10 in global strategy consulting. In 2007, it advised 30 of the world's 100 largest corporations and continued a long run of double-digit annual growth, bringing in €600 million, as compared to €555 million in 2006.

It has been an amazing rise for the man who began his firm with a staff of one. In 1967, Berger founded Roland Berger International Marketing Consultants, as it was originally called, in Munich. Within three years, the firm had sales of €2.86 million, and by 1980, that figure had exploded to €17.9 million, and by 1990, to €90 million. Today, the firm is one of the biggest strategy consulting outfits in the world, and the largest to have started in Europe. The firm feels that the key to its rapid growth has been internationalization. Of its 36 worldwide offices, 26 are located in European countries, and 76 percent of its projects are international.

Heading into the sunrise

When the Berlin Wall fell, that commitment to internationalization continued, with the firm flying into Central and Eastern Europe. Offices were quickly opened in Prague, Moscow, Budapest, Riga, Kiev and Bucharest. Dr. Uwe Kumm, managing partner at Roland Berger Russia, told a local business journal in October 2006 that the firm's business in the region had doubled each year since 1988. In April 2008, the firm opened an office in Istanbul, whose unique double identity as both a European and Asian city will allow it to serve as a hub for southern Russia, the Middle East and Africa. Erkut Uludag, a partner with the firm's U.S. operations, was appointed managing partner of the new facility and transferred to Turkey.

America is another story

For whatever reasons, though, taking on the U.S. market has been less attractive to the firm than battling post-Soviet bureaucracies. The firm admits that it was a "late arrival" to our shores, though this was partially due to regulatory prohibitions. After Deutsche Bank bought 75.1 percent of the firm in 1988, the U.S. Bank Holding Act forbid Roland Berger from establishing independent offices in the U.S. To get around the ban, the firm put together cooperative deals with American partners and set up a representative office in New York in 1995. When Berger and his partners in management bought back the Deutsche Bank shares in 1998, the barriers to U.S. expansion were lifted, and an independent office was set up in Detroit that same year. The New York office transitioned from representative to independent.

The other East

One of the latest attempts to integrate the firm's international connections was the September 2007 opening of a Japan Desk in the Düsseldorf office. The Japan Desk will specifically help Japanese companies expand into the European market. Approximately 80 Japanese companies sent representatives to the opening of the new desk, which is run by Partner Satoshi Nagashima.

A rainbow coalition

The firm believes that quality strategy consulting requires three elements: excellence, partnership and entrepreneurship. CEO Burkhard Schwenker believes that "outstanding management consultants are more than just brilliant analysts and strategists. Above all, they are strong and creative personalities from a variety of backgrounds." "Excellence," for the firm, means hiring a diverse group of professionals, regardless of their background or industry expertise. The firm handles every strategic area that might be necessary for a client's success, which it lists as growth, portfolio optimization, internationalization, cross-border mergers and acquisitions, postmerger integration, marketing and branding strategies, strategic alliances, reorganization and

corporate restructuring, and value-based management. “Entrepreneurship” has to do with the responsibility needed to achieve business success, whereas “partnership” means making sure clients trust the firm and vice versa, and that both are engaging in a mutually beneficial dialogue (plus it alludes to the fact that the firm wants to remain independent). Roland Berger is willing to wade into almost any industry and provide the experts needed to get the job done.

Larger than life

In the media, Roland Berger (the man) has tended to overshadow Roland Berger (the firm). Berger openly describes himself as a “political animal,” and says, “I advise individual politicians on business topics—strictly pro bono, person-to-person and irrespective of party membership.” Berger famously had a close relationship with former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder (sometimes a little too close for the media’s comfort), and Schroeder even asked Berger to be his economic minister in 1998. Berger declined the offer, saying simply, “A job in politics does not fit my personal and professional plans.”

In July 2003, Berger decided that the time had come to relinquish the day-to-day reins of his beloved firm, handing over his role to an executive committee of three. Since then he has worked on several projects for the European Union, expanding his power among top decision makers in Brussels.

Human dignity and rights

In March 2008, Berger announced plans for a foundation that will promote dignity and education across the globe. The foundation will give a yearly Roland Berger Human Dignity Award of €1 million to those individuals or institutions that have best promoted human dignity and rights. Berger says his interest in this area was inspired by his own childhood in Nazi Germany, when his father was arrested and imprisoned, and his home frequently searched. The foundation will also offer scholarships to promising underprivileged youths, in addition to helping fund other education-related initiatives. Berger got the foundation off the ground with €50 million of his own, and hopes its endowment will soon grow to at least €150 million.

Everybody get together

The firm has a definite taste for attending and organizing large-scale events. In early 2007, it established a strategic partnership with the World Economic Forum—for the next three years, Roland Berger will help create content for the WEF, helping to shape its direction and discussion. Specifically, the firm will work with the young global leaders section of the WEF, which supports the work of the world’s most dynamic leaders under age 40.

For the past four years, Roland Berger has held the lavish Best of European Business Awards to recognize top performing companies in the strongest economies across Europe. The awards are divided among eight countries, each with its own awards ceremony, in addition to a pan-European ceremony held in Brussels. For the 2008 awards, the firm evaluated public data and specialized indices for more than 6,000 companies over a period of nine months. The awards were part of the two-day European Business Summit, a conference on European business topics attended by more than 2,500 political and business leaders. A similar event, in strategic partnership with the Chinese web portal sina.com, has been established with the awards for the most globally competitive companies in China.

And the word became paper

Roland Berger floods media outlets and conferences with studies and surveys like *American Idol* floods Wal-Mart with pop albums. The firm has two academic book series, with a total of over 40 volumes published. The academic series makes the firm’s research available to the general public, while the management series publishes PhD dissertations by the firm’s professionals.

The firm also puts out the widely read *think:act* magazine. Three times a year, 20,000 issues are sent to decision makers in business, politics and media around the globe, in German, English, Chinese, Russian and Polish. In June 2007, the magazine won its third-straight Best of Corporate Publishing Award, topping the field in the financial services/real estate/consulting

category. Five hundred and eighty publications vied for BCP recognition in 2007. On top of this string of awards, the publication also won the 2006 Mercury Award for best consulting magazine. This competition was held by the International Academy of Communications Arts and Sciences in New York, and judged 940 corporate publications from 15 countries.

GETTING HIRED

Meet the partners

Roland Berger's U.S. staff focuses its recruiting efforts on a handful of schools, including the University of Michigan, Northwestern, the University of Chicago, Stern, Columbia and Wharton. Qualified recruits go through "two rounds" of interviews. The first round is held on campus and "consists of behavioral and small case elements." The second is held "at the office and consists of multiple cases." During the second round, the final case study is "prepared and presented to the senior partners." In fact, a senior consultant reports that "all the U.S. partners are involved" during this final stage. In other words, the firm is "very selective."

Experienced hires are invited to check Roland Berger's web site for events in their home country, or to view and apply to open positions online.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Old world meets new

Although Roland Berger "is less than 10 years old in the U.S.," it has "grown considerably" in the country, "especially in the automotive/industrial goods sector." Additionally, staffers say "the firm has a very international approach to management consulting," which means that "client interaction, project staffing (and even services) are always managed globally." In a nutshell, Roland Berger in the States is balancing the new with the old. As one senior consultant describes it, "The firm has a very open culture, yet strong values and tradition, especially due to its Western European heritage." Others note that the firm "stands to gain because of its deep international (especially European) roots," compared to the "U.S.-based roots of its primary competitors." And things seem to be on the right track, since "superior performance has always been a Roland Berger strength that has led to high client satisfaction," a senior consultant comments.

Jacks of all trades

When it comes to firm life, we're told that "team sizes are small," "work pressure is intense" and there's a "very dynamic environment," as the "firm is striving to grow its U.S. presence in several industry/function practices." Roland Berger has a "driven, professional and entrepreneurial culture," with "very talented people and challenging work." It's worth noting that consultants at Roland Berger "tend to be generalists, working on projects in a variety of industries." As a result, advises one insider, "If you want to join a firm to get lost in a sea of consultants (with team sizes of 25 to 40) and specialize in very specific industries/functions, this may not be the right firm for you."

Good things in small packages

Advantages to the small team size at Roland Berger include getting plenty of "exposure to high-level executives at clients," and "considerable interaction with the partners," especially because of the "very flat hierarchy." Plus, "there is considerable on-the-job learning," and "each consultant is assigned a mentor to help with career progress and development." That being said, one consultant complains that "the relationship between mentors and mentees could be stronger, instead of being limited to a periodic performance review." But insiders say that "most training is official" anyway. We're told it "typically occurs in Europe and is a good opportunity to network with international colleagues." A staffer adds, "Each year, one week of training is targeted, although this is not always achieved due to feasibility, scheduling conflicts or logistics issues."

There's no mad scramble to race up the ladder at the firm, since "there is no strict up-or-out policy." As one recent hire explains, "You have the ability to move at whatever pace you desire, based on your capability." A colleague agrees, "Consultants typically advance once their performance meets the expectations of the higher level, adding, "Junior consultants can advance in one to two years, and consultants may be promoted to senior consultant after one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half years."

Happy to work hard

When it comes to the daily grind, insiders say "work hours can vary greatly, depending on the project." "Typically," a consultant explains, they are "closer to 60 per week," but "70- to 100-hour weeks are not unheard of." Still, a respondent who reports consistent 70-hour weeks says he's perfectly content, despite the "long hours," as "enjoyable work and good pay make them worthwhile."

Indeed, we're told Roland Berger offers "competitive base and incentive pay," including a sign-on bonus and a "401(k) match up to a certain percentage." Plus, a well-fed consultant is a happy consultant: The Detroit office has a "well-stocked kitchen" and, even better, daily meals are often covered by the company.

Staying flexible for better ...

It also helps that the hours are "relatively flexible." A recent hire notes, "I have often been required to work from home due to personal obligations, and the partners in my office have always cooperated." Another adds, "Generally, consultants can work around major personal activities." We're also told that "some projects are understaffed and can limit personal activities, and once in a great while, a consultant could be at the office until midnight working on acquisition work." That said, few staffers report working on the weekends.

... or for worse

And although insiders say that at some point "travel will be required," it seems clear that consistent weeks away are not the norm. One source explains, "Consultants staffed primarily on automotive projects will rarely experience travel, whereas consultants working in other industries may be required to travel more." Since time on the road isn't a given, and because "travel requirements can vary dramatically," there can be "uncertainty about where you'll be from week to week." In fact, one staffer says that "many work elements have a high variance: travel requirements, work hours, project length, ability to take vacation and even frequency of team meetings"—this is largely "due to the relatively smaller scale of the operations." As a result, the respondent agrees, "It can be very difficult to plan ahead."

Jet-setters

Travel or no travel, Roland Berger has offices worldwide, and staffers report that "most projects seem to have an international element." A consultant gushes, "International collaboration is ever-present and special." "Our global reach is one of our selling points," says one, "and we do tend to work on projects with international teams." We're told that "established consultants" can also seek out "sabbatical and international exchange opportunities" if they have a strong urge to go somewhere new. But there's also a mix of cultures to be found even in the U.S. offices, where "the consulting team has extraordinary ethnic diversity." As one senior consultant explains, "If you want to travel internationally regularly, build teams with people from different cultures and, above all, work very hard in small teams of three to five people, this is the firm for you!" That being said, a colleague notes that although "the firm has a strong proportion of women in international offices, the North American offices have less gender diversity in the consulting force."

Roland Berger's charitable efforts also extend worldwide—we're told that the firm does "considerable pro bono work in Europe with various governments and NGOs." And in the U.S., the firm participates in "several charitable activities," including "pro bono consulting on a limited basis." An insider comments, "As more consultants become interested in pro bono work, this may increase."

ZS Associates

1800 Sherman Avenue, 7th Floor
Evanston, IL 60201
Phone: (888) 972-4173
Fax: (888) 972-7329
www.zsassociates.com

LOCATIONS

Evanston, IL (HQ)

Boston, MA • Chicago, IL • Los Angeles, CA • New York, NY • Philadelphia, PA • Princeton, NJ • San Mateo, CA • Frankfurt • London • Milan • Paris • Pune • Shanghai • Tokyo • Toronto • Zurich

PRACTICE AREAS

Customer Insights

Data Management, Performance Reporting & Analytics

Incentive Compensation Design & Goal Setting

Incentive Compensation & Goals Administration

Marketing Performance Measurement

Marketing Planning

Sales Force Design

Sales Performance Management

Sales Process Development

Segmentation

Territory & Account Planning

Territory Design

Value Proposition

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Founding Directors: Andris Zoltners & Prabhakant Sinha

Managing Director: Jaideep Bajaj

2008 Employees: 1,100

2007 Employees: 1,000



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Strong niche"
- "The lunchroom at ZS is as quiet as a library"
- "Great professional development and training"
- "Too focused"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Areas

#2 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting

Quality of Life

#9 – Formal Training

#9 – Travel Requirements

#19 – Firm Culture

#20 – Relationships with Supervisors

Diversity

#19 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- "Casual and academic culture"
- "You can actually count on seeing your colleagues every Monday morning"
- "Relatively high transparency in professional development and promotions"
- The firm has "never had a layoff"

DOWNERS

- "Lack of transparency in compensation"
- "Little control over project staffing, even as you gain experience"
- "As the firm grows, it is getting more political"
- Limited variation in project areas

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.zsassociates.com/careers

E-mail: careers@zsassociates.com

THE SCOOP

Smart, and into S&M

ZS Associates is a global management consulting firm focused on sales and marketing solutions, capability building and outsourcing. Now boasting 17 offices in 11 countries, the company was founded in 1983 by Andris Zoltners and Prabhakant Sinha, both professors at the Kellogg School of Management. ZS honors this pedigree with a highly academic approach to business solutions—as written in an October 2007 issue of *Crain's Chicago Business*, “Zoltners and Sinha showed that customers and territories could be reduced to mathematical formulas.”

ZS Associates' services range from strategy development to genuine tactical implementation. The firm assists its clients in developing and applying sales and marketing strategies on both an issue-specific and a large-scale level. It enhances client capabilities with new business processes, analytical methods and software, and also provides short- or long-term outsourcing for sales and marketing campaigns.

Get with the program

When servicing clients, the company's software often plays a vital role. MAPS, ZS Associates' initial product released in 1983, was the first PC-based mapping system for sales territory modeling. The program, today known as Territory Designer, facilitates the creation of balanced territories by analyzing sales and product data and modeling teams of sales people, customer service reps, telesales staff or other customer contact personnel. (Remember that bonus armies are awarded at the start of each turn for total control of a continent.) Another product, Affiliation Manager, is a web-based tool designed to increase sales through customer profiling, targeting and sales call planning. The program is meant to work in conjunction with a client's in-house customer relationship management system, building a database from the system's existing data.

In mid-2008, ZS renamed all of its software for inclusion in the Javelin Software Suite, a set of tools designed to tackle issues of sales and marketing. The suite's modules include incentives, call planning, promotion strategy, forecasting and account management. Territory Designer is a component of Javelin Promotion Strategy, while Affiliation Manager is part of Javelin Account Management.

Coming soon to a conference room near you

When not tinkering with a new suite of software or parleying with a client sales team, ZS deploys its executives for international conference appearances. In December 2007, the firm ran a clinic on accelerating sales force performance at the Indian School of Business in Hyderabad. That topic was covered again, Stateside, in February, May and September 2008. Additional conferences in 2008 included programs on incentive compensation, forecasting in the pharmaceutical industry and sales force effectiveness.

Moorman stands out

ZS execs are featured in more than just conferences. *Consulting* magazine selected Michael Moorman as one of its top-25 consultants for 2007. Moorman, a managing principal for business-to-business sales and marketing, was chosen primarily for his work with the once-struggling United Airlines. According to the publication, Moorman “designed and advised 35 inter-related strategy, implementation and continuous improvement workstreams that transformed United's business capabilities. By the end of 2006, United captured 80 percent of Chicago's top 50 accounts—winning more than \$100 million from competitors.”

Stay in school

As would be expected from the founders of a firm that faithfully sponsors skills conferences, Zoltners and Sinha didn't give up the classroom once they moved into the corporate world. Zoltners remains a professor of marketing at Kellogg, boasting an

accumulated tenure of more than 30 years. Sinha teaches ancillary courses for Kellogg as well as the Indian School of Business's executive education program. Over 500 sales executives attend the partners' courses each year. Zoltners and Sinha also regularly give instruction on sales performance at London Business School's executive education program.

GETTING HIRED

It takes two

The "streamlined" hiring process at ZS consists of two rounds of interviews, both of which "contain cases and behavioral components." Case questions "are based on real business situations, not brainteasers." The first round may take place "on the phone or face to face," and usually "has two portions (30 minutes each)," while the second round "requires candidates to come to the office and talk to four to six different people from different levels in the company." One recent hire remembers that his second round was composed of "one hour of case, one hour of analytical, one hour of behavioral and one hour of a demonstration." The firm indicates that candidates for consultant positions take part in a panel presentation, whereas those seeking an associate position participate in a demonstration of work overseen by a current associate. A longtimer notes that throughout the process, "each evaluator assigns ratings on various competencies that are entered in a central system. An overall score is generated for each candidate, and is then discussed by all interviewers and a decision to hire (or not) is made."

ZS recruits at "all major business schools" for consultant-level positions, and at "other top schools"—including Michigan, Illinois, Northwestern, Princeton and Cornell—for associates. First-round interviews for associates are held on campus, but otherwise, the process is more or less the same as for experienced hires. Offices tend to focus their efforts at schools in their geographic area; nevertheless, explains one newbie, while it's true that "you have to interview with the office that is recruiting you," it's also the case that "there is an opportunity to receive an offer from another office."

Start out with a summer

Many full-time staffers at ZS got their start as summer interns. Spending a summer at the firm is an excellent way to get a foot in the door, since "a high percentage of interns receive offers and return full time." The program is reportedly "fantastic—it's why I came back!" exclaims an associate consultant in California. One recent hire recalls, "They did not sugarcoat it (hours or work), and they gave me real stuff to do." Even better, "they spoil you rotten with fun activities and free meals." Another source says that "the internship program was great because I was treated as a real associate and given actual responsibilities on a team, not just made-for-intern projects. It gave me a good understanding of the type of work consultants do." A colleague adds, "I had internships at two Fortune 100 firms before ZS," but the internship at ZS "was definitely the best I had."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Work with your best man

Staffers say that what stands out most about ZS is the "friendly, collegial, supportive and collaborative" atmosphere. "We thrive in a culture where there is room for all of us to be successful," a happy manager beams. An associate in Chicago echoes, "We are encouraged to not only perform better, but also to help others perform better." "Some of my best co-workers are also my closest friends," says another staffer, who adds, "I spend a ton of time with my co-workers outside of work. We hang out at night and on the weekends. We take vacations together and stand up at each other's weddings."

A senior source praises, "The culture at ZS is unbelievably strong. I can't imagine working anywhere else and getting as much fulfillment, and enjoying it as much, as I do here. I've had many other opportunities, both in consulting and in industry, and none come close." In a nutshell, explains a consultant, the firm is full of "supportive, mild-mannered, smart people who want to do the right things for their clients."

Doors are always open

The camaraderie extends beyond peer groups as well. Staffers say ZS “has an open-door policy” and supervisors are “very accessible,” approachable and “always willing to help out.” “The firm has a very flat structure so that associates can feel comfortable working directly with principals,” explains an insider. “This is really the single strongest aspect to creating a learning environment with the right mix of independence and collegial support,” another interjects. An associate consultant adds, “I see and socialize with many managers outside of work, and they are great people too.” And a Midwesterner comments, “Although ZS is getting bigger and more institutional, senior management still thinks of the company as a small firm and acts accordingly.”

In keeping with this small-firm mentality, the ZS environment is also “casual” (“many employees wear jeans four to five days a week”). Plus, “everyone is referred to on a first-name basis, including the founders of the firm, Andy and Prabha.” Some respondents claim that, if anything, things can get “somewhat too unstructured.” Despite the casual atmosphere, though, there’s still an “intense work ethic,” and there’s no question that “everyone you’ll work with will be smart and hardworking.”

It’s good to be new

To that end, staffers tend to put in 55-hour workweeks, on average, although “work hours are very cyclical” and “can fluctuate greatly.” “The hours are usually heavy for a few weeks, then light for a few weeks,” explains an associate. It seems that the workload is lighter for greener staff—one new hire explains, “As a new consultant, I average about 50 hours per week. A more senior consultant and manager will average more, but I have not witnessed anyone working ridiculous hours.” Perhaps that source hasn’t been around long enough to see the real deal: A consultant with nearly four years’ experience at ZS says that for him, “A light week is 45 to 50 hours, while heavy weeks start at 80 and occasionally top three digits.”

Staffers agree that even if the load is lighter at times, “there is no ‘on the beach’ at ZS,” and “even if you have a few days of downtime you still need to be in the office for the full day.”

Balancing for bedtime

All this means that, “in general, the work/life balance is good,” but it “could definitely be better.” In fact, ZS “has few policies typically associated with work/life balance,” a consultant remarks. And, a manager warns, “ZS staffs people on multiple projects, and once you are on more than two projects, work/life balance goes out the window.” Still, “there are always peaks and valleys, but compared to my friends at other firms, the work/life balance at ZS is very fair.” Helping create some balance is the option to “work from home in the evenings, when necessary, rather than staying in the office late.” An associate principal shares, “I’m home every night for dinner with my kids and to put them to bed. Then, I often work for another two hours before bed, but I have the flexibility to do that.” Work on the weekends (which is reportedly “frequent, but not typically onerous”) can also be done from home.

By and large, when it comes to managing outside commitments, the onus falls on the staffer to plan ahead. “If you have a commitment that you must attend outside of the office,” explains one insider, “it’s your responsibility to make sure that you can handle that commitment and still finish your project work before the deadline.” We’re told that “managers are generally understanding,” and “plans made in advance are almost always recognized,” but “shorter notice is not always met with the same success.” But given the collaborative nature of the firm, “other project team members are willing to pick up the burden if one member needs to tend to any personal obligations—including vacation,” notes a business associate,

Travel? What for?

It also helps that ZS “has a sensible travel policy” in which “travel requirements are minimal.” “We travel only when it makes sense and when it will add value to the project,” explains one insider. “Frankly,” adds another, “I don’t understand why other consulting firms need to be on site four or five days a week.” The company notes, however, that it is specifically overnight travel that is kept to a minimum, and adds that on-site projects are sometimes a reality of the business, since project management often requires interaction

with the clients. In addition, “ZS has made an effort to open new offices close to our clients to avoid excessive travel.” In fact, the firm “has several types of engagements that require absolutely no travel, especially for lower-level consultants.” If you’re itching to get on the road, “you can request those projects” that demand travel, but generally, staffers can expect a travel schedule of “one to five days per month at the consultant level, less at the associate level and a bit more at the manager level.”

Staying out of the boondocks

Insiders agree that “long consulting hours are much more manageable when you get to go home at night.” But aside from allowing staffers to sleep in their own beds, the limited travel has the added advantage of creating a “much friendlier, tighter-knit culture.” One new hire states, “Since people are mostly in the office, it is easier to share knowledge and get to know your co-workers.” Plus, adds another, “Travel is rare enough that it’s still fun and a good break from the office.” “We’re fortunate that most of our clients are located in attractive parts of the country. We’re not traveling to some factory in the boondocks—our clients are located in major metro areas where there are nice hotels, good restaurants and easy travel access,” a principal insists.

For those occasional longer trips, it’s worth noting that “ZS does not have a ‘home office on Friday’ policy.” And, a few staffers suggest that the travel load may be piling up: “Expectations are increasing somewhat, as on-site work has become more common recently,” a consultant reports.

Black-box bonuses

There’s always room for improvement when it comes to pay, and while some staffers say their compensation packages are acceptable, others aren’t as content. “I have been satisfied with base compensation, and bonuses are around 13 percent,” says one associate consultant. But, states a colleague, “even if the company has a very good year, you can never expect more than a 10 to 12 percent bonus at best,” adding, “ZS raises and bonuses are a black box.” Echoes a manager, “The compensation system here is not transparent.” ZS HR itself, however, disagrees that the compensation packages are below those of competitors, as it annually benchmarks employee salaries compared to other consulting firms.

There’s also some dispute about whether there’s been an improvement in this area in recent years. One insider explains, “ZS used to have a reputation for having very low compensation, but when I compare notes with other friends in consulting now, it sounds like they are getting more competitive.” A higher-up feels differently: “ZS pays well below average once you hit management. Managers’ salaries are well below those at BCG, Bain and McKinsey.” She adds that “bonuses are very low as well.” In terms of other forms of compensation, 3 percent of salary is matched in a 401(k) plan, up to the federal maximum contribution (which can differ by person), although one manager notes that there’s a “poor vesting policy” that goes along with this. In addition, only partners can participate in profit sharing.

Strict on spending

Many staffers agree that when it comes to other perks, the firm is “very budget-conscious and restrictive with expenses.” “The management is too tight with their money and they nitpick minor expenses, the costs of events, etc.,” a source notes. Benefits on offer include a “strong health plan,” in which the firm “pays 90 percent of the premiums”—we’re told the price is kept “fairly low due to our average age of 29.” There are also “several officewide events throughout the year,” designed by a “fun committee.” These events include a Christmas party, summer picnic and “office events for kids.”

In addition, employees “start with three weeks’ vacation,” which is bumped up to “four weeks at three years.” A source explains that staffers have the “ability to take long leaves of absence to study for the GMAT, travel extensively or just to decide what you want to do with the rest of your life.”

When it comes to décor, “offices are very functional, and do not have an emphasis on luxury, but have all amenities needed.” We’re also told that “some offices are much nicer than others”—most staffers seem to agree that the “Evanston office is not as desirable” as, say, the “new Philadelphia office,” which has “lots of natural light and an open environment.” Still, everyone gets

“paid dinners and cab rides when working late hours,” as well as “free coffee and juice daily,” “bagels/fruit/yogurt once a week” and “periodic team lunches and dinners.”

Training that’s “just in time”

There’s no skimping on training, which gets high marks all around for being “excellent” and even “world class.” A newbie in Chicago explains, “There is a formal new-employee orientation for one week, which includes training,” and ZS “has a mentorship program in place for new associates and consultants to help them get acclimated to the culture and our work.” In addition, “each month there are one-day seminars on different topics.”

A consultant adds that there are also “plenty of opportunities to learn on the job and to take on substantial responsibilities on each engagement.” “We’re run by academics,” notes a principal, “so continual learning is a core value.” A cohort adds, “One of the strongest things we do is ‘just in time’ training, where we bring the trainers to the teams who need it when they need it. Others can join such training forums opportunistically.”

In addition, notes a recent hire, “Graduate degrees are encouraged, and many (if not most) leave with an open offer to come back after grad school with tuition reimbursement.” A California-based consultant tells us he received “paid support for my part-time MBA,” as well as “decreased hours while going to school for three years, keeping my full salary.” The firm clarifies that decreased hours may not always be possible for consultants pursuing a graduate degree, but notes instead that there is an increased awareness of the need to make staffing adjustments due to external commitments.

No programs to push diversity

There’s also “diversity training for employees in all offices above a certain size.” Many respondents agree that “ZS is very diverse” and there are “people from many countries and backgrounds working in this firm.” Still, while some insist that “there is no racial majority within ZS,” others note that “minority representation is visibly low”; in particular, reports one staffer, “there don’t seem to be as many Latinos or African-Americans at our firm as I would expect.” A manager comments, “I truly believe the firm is colorblind with respect to hiring and promotion”; however, he adds, “there are no special programs to promote diversity.”

One consultant cites the statistic that, “as a firm, we have only 38 percent women,” but adds, “ZS makes a noticeable effort to recruit women.” The “makeup of the leadership is still tipped toward males, but several new partners promoted recently have been women.” One female principal explains the dilemma: “Many women opt out of consulting as they begin having families. I don’t think this is unique to our firm. Any woman who sticks with it, however, has as good a chance as any man to make partner (principal).” Another female associate consultant agrees, “The number of females is somewhat low in our office, especially at the senior levels. However, I think we have a lot of strong female analysts and consultants on their way up, and the firm empowers both males and females to succeed.” We’re told there are some options for new parents to work part time, but one staffer warns, “Almost all women who choose to start a family become schedulers/HR when they return, as these are the only roles in the firm that provide flexible hours. Basically, once you have a child, your progression stops.”

When it comes to sexual orientation, there is “not a lot of discussion one way or the other,” but the firm is “very respectful of personal choices,” and also provides domestic partner benefits.

Localized community service

Insiders say that ZS “could do better” when it comes to corporate social responsibility, and insist that most “initiatives are driven by individuals” and “not explicitly sponsored by ZS”—there’s also “no pro bono consulting.” Staffers have participated in Habitat for Humanity, Christmas present drives, elementary school tutoring and blood drives. Involvement tends to be office-specific, with some locations more active and supportive than others. We’re told that the “ZS Princeton office recently sponsored a fund raiser for the American Heart Association,” and the Pennsylvania office has an “annual public service initiative that is conducted in May.” “If someone has an idea, it’s usually very easy to get approval and support,” says a California-based source. An insider claims that “the firm is looking to increase these efforts.”

Cambridge Associates LLC

100 Summer Street
Boston, MA 02110
Phone: (617) 457-7500
Fax: (617) 457-7501
www.cambridgeassociates.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (HQ)

Arlington, VA
Dallas, TX
Menlo Park, CA
London
Singapore
Sydney

PRACTICE AREAS

Advisory Services

Asset Allocation & Investment Policy Development
Financial Planning Advisory Services
Financial Policy Databases & Research
Governance Counseling
Manager Search & Evaluation
Performance Measurement & Reporting Services
Planned Giving Services
Strategic Financial Advisory Services

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

President & CEO: Sandra A. Urie

2008 Employees: 850

2007 Employees: 800

UPPERS

- Opportunity to "develop deep expertise," rather than "jumping from industry to industry"
- Long-term relationships with clients
- "The ability to be flexible with my hours and time in the office"

DOWNERS

- High turnover rate
- Young average age of staffers
- "Expensive" medical insurance

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.cambridgeassociates.com/careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Fun culture, top of its niche"
- "Small players"
- "More diverse in experience"
- "Nerdy"

THE SCOOP

The old college try

The co-founders of Cambridge Associates started with what they knew. In 1973, former Harvard roommates James Bailey and Hunter Lewis began researching the endowment fund investments of their alma mater. Today, CA oversees hundreds of billions of dollars in assets for more than 850 institutional and private clients around the world, and its core client base continues to be nonprofits. The firm provides investment consulting, independent research and performance monitoring services, with its traditional consulting services centered on asset allocation and investment policy development, manager search and evaluation, performance measurement and reporting, and capital markets and manager research.

Helping lambs become lions

After their initial success with Harvard, Bailey and Lewis thought other universities might want to strengthen their investments with research from CA, too. Twelve universities took them up on the idea, and 30 years later, all 12 are still clients. The firm tries to foster long-term client relationships, as opposed to quick-fix projects. This is reflected in the fact that most new clients come through referrals from existing clients, which the firm touts as evidence of its high satisfaction rates.

CA gradually began to offer its research to other nonprofit institutions, such as foundations, museums and hospitals. Soon, these clients were requesting consulting services beyond just research. In 1982, the firm began taking on private clients, including large institutions that oversee pension, agency and government funds. Today, it works with clients of a variety of asset sizes, levels of complexity and consulting needs, although the focus remains on nonprofits.

“Nonprofit” doesn’t mean “no money”

If you want to get involved in major investments, but still want to work in the nonprofit arena, then CA might be just what you’re looking for. Since most of the firm’s new clients come from referrals, staffers spend most of their time working on actual investing, instead of hunting new business. Plus, since many nonprofits control vast sums of money, CA is definitely playing with the big boys—as of June 2008, its clients controlled more than \$1 trillion.

Hedge fund managers scramble to get the firm’s attention, and with good reason—by March 2008, CA had spread \$20.2 billion over hundreds of hedge funds. David Shukis, the firm’s head of hedge fund consulting and research, usually puts hedge fund managers through a rigorous screening process before investing clients’ money. Low-risk investments are a higher priority at CA than at many other firms. In a September 2007 interview with *HFM Week*, Shukis said he needs “to see a clearly articulated investment strategy ... that can generate an attractive return without a high degree of leverage.” After that, he and his staff will meet with a manager at least three or four times to get an idea of the manager’s background and business plan. The entire process can take up to a year.

But a low-risk focus doesn’t mean CA is shy about heading overseas. From 2002 to 2007, the firm doubled its investments outside the United States, and now has a particular focus on Asian markets. As part of its global push, CA opened an office in Sydney, Australia, in August 2007. The new office joined international counterparts already established in London and Singapore.

Give us your huddled masses

CA’s roots in the nonprofit world have led it to welcome clients that don’t quite fit in at larger firms. By March 2007, for instance, a quarter of its clients had endowments of less than \$100 million. Because of its longstanding relationship with many hedge funds, CA can persuade them to take smaller-than-usual investments.

Mission: very possible

In February 2008, the firm announced its new Mission Investing Group, which will help clients develop mission-based investing strategies, such as tobacco-free or clean technology. Some of the clients the group will be advising are the Annie E. Casey Foundation (helping vulnerable children and families), the Meyer Memorial Trust Foundation (local venture capital, clean technology and buyout funds) and the F.B. Heron Foundation (supporting groups that help business grow in low-income communities). The group will provide clients with lists of key players within their mission, a manager database, annual performance reports concerning the mission, an investing resource guide and strategies for how to best achieve the mission.

Not ready to get a tan yet

Even with a successful company under his belt, co-founder Bailey hasn't exactly retired to the Bahamas. In November 2007, he was named *Foundation & Endowment Money Management's* Consultant of the Year. Bailey was particularly noted for his work with the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (which he helped increase exposure to a wider variety of assets around the world) and Pomona College (which he helped invest more in oil and gas, private equity, international stocks and hedge funds). The award also noted how CA clients were largely immune to the heavy losses associated with high-leverage hedge funds in 2007. Sloan Kettering CFO Michael Gutnick remarked that Bailey had an "encyclopedic knowledge of investment managers."

Keeping up with its studies

CA began as a research firm and has stayed close to that base. President & CEO Sandra Urie told *Pensions & Investments* in March 2007 that "in traditional marketable securities areas, we have close to 5,000 products in our database. In the hedge space, we (track) 1,700 managers in our database. In non-marketable (securities), we have two databases. One is of open deals—500 as of the end of the year. In the monitoring database, we have 2,700 partnerships and over 50,000 portfolio companies trapped. I think just about everyone knows they have to knock on Cambridge's door."

GETTING HIRED

Focus on fit for some ...

Insiders say there are "usually three rounds of interviews for consultant candidates" at CA, but reports differ as to the interview topics. One associate comments that interviews consist of "all behavioral and fit questions," including "strengths/weaknesses," "greatest accomplishment/failure," "team experiences" and "how your past experiences apply to the position." Others agree that there are "very basic personality interview questions," and note that a candidate's "resume will be heavily focused on." One staffer recalls that he was asked "only one finance question: Name three things affecting the market at the moment."

... and cases for others

But an executive insists, "We use written cases for our interviews with current or recent MBA students/graduates." He goes on to explain, more specifically, that "the first round includes an analytical case what is intended to show the candidates' quantitative abilities. The second round includes a client management case that is intended to reveal any particular strengths the candidate may have in this area. The third and final round includes a writing sample case modeled on writing a quarterly performance report for a mock client."

Cambridge actively recruits at "top-level" business schools around the country, including "HBS, Sloan, Tuck, Darden, Yale, Fuqua, Kellogg, Haas and Stanford GSB." A recent hire advises, "Realistically, above a 3.0 GPA is needed."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Tight-knit teams

Insiders say that in the “easygoing,” “business casual,” “collaborative” and “collegial” environment at Cambridge, “information sharing is encouraged.” A newbie remarks, “It’s definitely an environment that cultivates learning and teamwork,” adding that his co-workers are a “tight-knit and friendly group.” A longtimer observes, “Consultants are actually evaluated on such things as creating a productive work environment for their teams.” “I really love it here,” raves a colleague.

Be your own boss

Getting the most out of the job is up to staffers themselves, since “there is very little management at CA.” Some find this structure frustrating, especially since staffers are young: We’re told the “average age is 24.” An associate complains, “22-year-olds managing themselves does not work,” adding, “Reports are going out in poor shape due to lack of knowledgeable analysts.” But most believe that being able to “self-manage” is a positive. An investment consultant explains, “We all have autonomy to work with our clients as we see best, but with support from our colleagues wherever and whenever we need it. We all can interact on a daily basis with senior management if we wish. They are very accessible.” And a recent hire notes, “CA is definitely what you make of it. It can potentially be a data-entry job if you view it that way. But if you make an effort to build relationships with the more experienced workers and learn the rationale behind the numbers, you’ll get the invaluable exposure to the industry that your department specializes in.”

There is some help along the way, in the form of both official and unofficial training. A staffer reports, “We have a one-month training program each summer for both new consulting associates (usually coming straight from college) and for new consultants (usually coming from business/other graduate school). These are separate programs, run by associates or consultants.” He adds, “The informal training occurs on the job, as we also practice an apprenticeship model of learning.”

Big on balance

But for the independent-minded staffer, the freedom and flexibility are definite pluses. “I control when I need to stay late and when I might need to leave a bit early,” shares a higher-up. “It is up to me and there is no pressure from management to adhere to an overly onerous schedule.” An executive adds, “There are busier and slower times, of course, but generally it is each consultant’s responsibility to manage his/her time. There is management support if you are overloaded, and you are able to decrease or change your workload without any kind of penalty if things become unsustainable over the long term.” Overall, staffers report workweeks that hover around 45 to 50 hours, and we’re told “there is no face time” at the firm.

Travel is also kept at reasonable levels. Client meetings “are generally scheduled well in advance; thus, we each can anticipate busy travel times and plan accordingly.” And while face-to-face meetings are the norm, the firm is also “equipped for voice or video conferencing, when that is appropriate.” In all, “the travel load varies by consultant, but does not have a significant impact on our work life in the office.”

A Boston-based staffer is pleased to say that his colleagues “have well-rounded lives outside the office” (for example, there are “several professional musicians on staff”). They are also a diverse group. We’re told that “almost half of our managing directors are women,” including the CEO. A longtimer insists the firm is “very, very receptive to hiring, promoting and mentoring minorities,” adding, “We have taken formal steps with regard to our recruiting to increase the ethnic diversity of our staff.” In addition, staffers says, “we have several senior-level people” who are openly GLBT.

A revolving door

When it comes to moving up the ladder, insiders report that there are “two promotion points: senior consultant and managing director.” There’s no up-or-out policy, and “no set time frame for promotion to either position,” although “there is a tenure

requirement with respect to consideration for managing director (only four years).” A higher-up explains, “Promotion is entirely dependent on the individual and how they are progressing, which can make for some rapid promotions. If someone does not receive a promotion one year, they are considered again the next year.”

That being said, one recent hire expresses concern about the “opportunity for advancement,” warning that it “seems like there is a ceiling that one reaches after several years with the company.” He finds that “many older workers leave to go back to business school or to go into other industries. The only way to differentiate yourself (since your work is pretty much the same with everyone else’s) is to be proactive in meeting people and taking initiative to form a network within the company and with outside clients.”

Others agree that there is a “high turnover rate” (up to “about 40 percent” in some groups)—and not just among the upper levels. “I started with 10 people in December and there are only three of us left now,” reports an associate in Virginia. Still, some say the turnover is good news for the staffers who stick around, since it “allows competent people to quickly assume leadership roles within the group.” An associate is proud to say that “the company is continuously growing and improving.”

Sabbaticals supported

Those who stick around enjoy benefits such as “6 percent matching 401(k) after 30 days of employment,” “tuition reimbursement,” and “maternity leave and paternity leave.” In addition, new parents are “offered the ability to extend either beyond the ‘normal’ leave, if needed.” In general, staffers are allotted “three weeks of vacation time to start,” which grows to “four weeks of vacation time after two years.” Overall, we’re told, the firm is “very flexible on vacation days.” There’s also a “sabbatical program” for those who feel the need for a longer break.

Hewitt Associates

100 Half Day Road
Lincolnshire, IL 60069
Phone: (847) 295-5000
Fax: (847) 295-7634
www.hewitt.com

LOCATIONS

Lincolnshire, IL (HQ)
93 offices in 33 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Actuarial
Communication
Compensation
Corporate Transformation & Transactions
Executive Compensation & Corporate Governance
Global Risk Services
Health Management
HR Effectiveness
International HR
Leadership
Retirement
Talent & Performance

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: HEW (NYSE)
Chairman & CEO: Russell Fradin
2007 Employees: 23,000
2006 Employees: 22,000
2007 Revenue: \$2.92 billion
2006 Revenue: \$2.79 billion



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "HR experts"
- "Losing ground"
- "Great culture to work in"
- "Chose outsourcing over consulting"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#2 – Human Resources Consulting

UPPER

- "Plenty of room for advancement"

DOWNER

- Culture is still poorly defined

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.hewittassociates.com/Intl/NA/en-US/workinghere

THE SCOOP

HR hurdler

Hewitt Associates, working from over 93 offices in 33 countries, offers services from three segments: consulting, benefits outsourcing and human resources business process outsourcing. The company advises clients on human capital issues, such as talent management, retirement, financial management, mergers and health care, and can also be contracted to run a portion or all of a client's human resources programs, processes and functions. Revenue in 2007 approached \$3 billion, with the benefits outsourcing business accounting for 50 percent of that total, the consulting segment for 30 percent and the HR BPO segment rounding out the last 20 percent.

Ted Hewitt founded the firm in 1940 as an insurance brokerage. Experiences with an early client inspired him to develop services geared toward employee benefits, either in an outsourcing or an advisory role. Over the following decades, the firm pioneered a number of now-standard HR functions. For instance, in the 1940s, it incepted the first noncontributory employee savings and pension plan recognized by the IRS. In the 1950s, it took the lead as the first company to measure ongoing investment performance for defined benefits plans. Then, in the 1970s, it designed the total compensation measurement methodology to gauge the value of salary packages.

The firm's growth during this time matched its breakthrough innovations—offices were opened throughout the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s, with international expansion beginning in 1976, through the addition of a Toronto location. Branches in Europe followed in the 1980s, and soon after came a push into the Asia Pacific region. Hewitt today provides services annually to more than 20 million employees worldwide.

Hired help for the hired help

Hewitt's consulting segment pursues two lines of business: benefits and talent and organization. The offerings in the benefits segment include retirement, financial management and actuarial consulting, health care consulting and communication. In retirement, financial management and actuarial consulting, Hewitt helps to match retirement programs with the needs of the organization, provides analysis and financial strategies for the resolution of pension issues, and advises on asset allocation, investment policies and investment manager performance. Care is taken to ensure that business objectives are met, while still adhering to governmental regulations and accounting standards. Actuarial services such as these tend to contribute significant revenue due to the ongoing nature of client engagements.

In September 2007, Hewitt announced a newly formed defined contribution consulting practice specifically dedicated to providing companies with a full spectrum of defined contribution services and solutions, including strategy and plan design, cost and risk management, investment consulting, behavioral finance, administration, communication, and legal and compliance consulting. Also launched in 2007 was the global risk services initiative, which helps pension plan sponsors in the U.S. and the U.K. optimize the risk-reward equation in the ever-changing retirement plan landscape.

The company's health management consultants and actuaries work with clients to measure and manage the health care costs and health risks of large employers' covered populations. They work with employers to set their overall health and health care strategy, to design employer plans and programs, and to negotiate with, select and manage appropriate vendors to implement that strategy.

The talent and organization line helps clients manage the potential of critical talent, executives and next-generation leaders to increase productivity, speed and organizational growth, and to improve the return on human capital investment. In this practice, Hewitt specializes in six areas: leadership, talent and performance, compensation, executive compensation and corporate governance, HR effectiveness, and corporate transformation and transactions.

Remembering the little (or midsized, anyway) people

Hewitt's health care business beefed up both its consulting and outsourcing offerings in March 2008. First, the company introduced a new administration platform—Core Benefit Administration. The web-based solution, meant for organizations with fewer than 15,000 employees, simplifies benefits communication, enrollment and ongoing administration by creating a single destination with access for all workers. It also automates eligibility management, new-hire processing, and life and employment events. The new outsourcing offering is the Hewitt Pharmacy Purchasing Group, a coalition of drug dispensers that opens midsized companies to the pricing matrices normally only available to Fortune 50 employers. The group offers transparent pricing, customized benefit plan design and pharmacy consulting services. CVS Caremark was named the first preferred vendor in the new arrangement.

Takeout, but not drive-through

Hewitt's large-market benefits outsourcing segment makes use of a proprietary system called Total Benefit Administration. TBA keeps track of annual enrollment processes for benefits programs, keeps employees informed of options, and simplifies the implementation of changes and new choices. To keep information readily available, the solution provides web-based tools, an automated voice response system and call centers. Special applications and programs are made available to clients through the solution as well, such as ProviderDirect, a tool that allows browsing of in-network medical providers by criteria such as specialty, location and gender, and Participant Advocacy, a service for resolving health plan eligibility, access and claim issues encountered by workers. In addition, Hewitt provides an array of point solutions to complement its core benefits offering, including flexible spending account administration, absence management and other compliance-related processes.

Hewitt's BPO segment provides services devoted to managing employee data, administering benefits, payroll and other human resources processes, and recording and managing transactions within the realms of talent development, the overall workforce and other core HR processes (i.e., payroll, time and labor, record-keeping and performance management).

Out with the old ...

In January 2008, Hewitt announced an agreement to sell its Cyborg business, a software and payroll services unit it had acquired in 2003 through the purchase of Cyborg Worldwide Inc. The purchaser this time will be Vista Equity Partners, a private equity firm with a portfolio of software and technology companies. The divestiture is seen by the company as a shedding of noncore assets, although it will continue to license Cyborg's software for use by clients (some would call this a win-win situation).

... in with the new

The firm made additional deals in the first half of 2008, on the opposite side of the ledger. In April 2008, it announced the acquisition of LCG, a total absence management services provider. With the deal, Hewitt will provide administration and management of all forms of absence, web-based data integration and reporting, root case analysis and return-to-work programs. Hewitt can leverage its health plan usage from its health management consulting business, paired with absence and clinical information, to help companies identify the unique patterns linking health and absenteeism.

Earlier, in March 2008, the firm acquired CSI, a provider of data, analytics and compensation consulting solutions in Australia and New Zealand. The business adds a new capability to Hewitt's HR consulting roster in the region, while also making it one of the few companies in the region with a complete range of services. That same month, Hewitt acquired New Bridge Street Consultants, a compensation consultancy in the U.K. with a client list featuring 40 percent of the FTSE 350. The purchase was sought primarily as means of expanding the firm's global presence, while also enhancing its existing services.

An additional acquisition was made in September 2007, when Hewitt picked up RealLife HR for \$42 million. RealLife is a U.S. health and welfare administration company known for its outsourcing to middle-market organizations. The buy boosts Hewitt's benefits outsourcing business for smaller clients, a move shown in a more obvious light through the recent unveiling of its Core Benefit Administration platform and Hewitt Pharmacy Purchasing Group.

Seen 'round the world and on the page

When not setting up shop in a client's HR department, Hewitt engages in a number of knowledge-promoting activities. Its consultants attend conferences and industry events—both to present and to observe—and they also frequently publish research studies on major topics concerning HR or the workforce in general. Associate Jeff Munn spoke on accounting transparency in employee health plans at the April 2008 World Health Care Congress, an annual meeting of more than 2,000 CEOs, senior executives and government officials from the health care sector to discuss trends or difficulties arising in the industry. The company also frequently undertakes industry studies, such as its 2007 Trends and Experience in 401(k) Plans survey, which reveals several gradually emerging trends in 401(k) plans—including design, investments, education, communication, administration and plan effectiveness—based on responses from more than 300 corporations, many in the Fortune 500.

Hewitt also collaborated with *Fortune* magazine and the RBL Group in 2007 to rank the top companies for leaders, an annual list that dates back to 2001. Companies in the Americas, Europe and Asia Pacific are considered for the ranking, which takes into account analysis of what key factors set the top organizations apart, and what competitive advantages can be gained from a reputation for leadership. In 2007, GE and Procter & Gamble were named No. 1 and No. 2 on the list, with Nokia Corp. coming in third.

Compensation for the soul

Hewitt makes efforts to give back to the communities in which it works—no small task for a global entity. Financial support is given in the form of grants to nonprofits, as well as gifts to collegiate institutions. The firm prioritizes projects and institutions to aid the underprivileged, whether through educational opportunities or quality-of-life improvements. Employees are encouraged to participate in charitable programs like Habitat for Humanity and Junior Achievement, and are given up to two days of paid time off each year to volunteer their time to help a human services or educational cause. Pro bono work and supervisory roles are also offered to charities to help organize and boost their operations. Hewitt is a corporate partner of the American Red Cross, Court-Appointed Special Advocates, the American Cancer Society and the AIDS Foundation, among others.

GETTING HIRED

Search and screen

To find and compete for jobs at Hewitt, the firm tells prospective employees to log on to the careers page of its web site. There, available positions may be searched by keyword, location or job category. Candidates are encouraged to apply online (you'll need to register on the site before the application can be submitted). If there isn't a specific position that seems like a match, candidates may click "submit your profile" for general employment consideration.

After reviewing resumes and applications, Hewitt will contact candidates for interviews, as appropriate, depending on its needs and the candidate's background. Sources say "up to three or four visits to the company" may be required; during these sessions, people should expect to meet "with numerous individuals." The company reports, however, that it is moving to a consolidated interview process, where most candidates should be able to complete their interviews in one day of meeting multiple assessors. For some positions, such as customer services and administrative roles, tests are sometimes required. There are also openings that involve "more advanced background screening for certain clients." (Hewitt says all new hires must undergo "comprehensive background screening" before they can begin work.)

While "the interview process is behavioral-based," for the most part, an insider notes that "many of the hiring managers are still looking for fit."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Caught in flux

The culture at Hewitt has been in an “ongoing” state of flux for years, which leads to frustration and some “negative attitudes” for some employees. “Many of the things they are doing clash with the values [they purport to] function under,” a source says. She adds that, at times, the Hewitt culture seems at odds “with the fact that we are an HR consulting firm.”

Trimming perks

“Long hours” can be necessary, and in some cases that means weekend work. However, this work can “be done from home.” Perhaps more bothersome to Hewitt insiders is a perceived pay inequity. Comparing her role “to similar roles in other companies,” one insider calls her salary “definitely unequal to the work expectations.” The dip in compensation approval is fairly recent, another respondent confirms. “My base pay was about average for my position and experience when I was hired three years ago,” he says. “Target bonus, perks and benefits were all relatively high. Shortly after that, most of the perks (including free meals) were eliminated, and benefits were significantly reduced.” A colleague laments the lack of “appreciation for what you are doing.” As a result, insiders say Hewitt has “lost some of its best and most experienced people,” and warn that “pay increases and bonuses have all but gone away for everyone other than upper management.”

What remains is a fairly standard package of benefits, including “profit sharing and a 401(k) match.” The firm notes that it also provides health, dental and vision coverage; disability and life insurance; a paid time off bank and eight paid holidays per year; 85 percent tuition reimbursement up to \$5,000 each year and interest-free loans for the purchase of home computer equipment.

Bonus challenges

One source who is pleased with the manager-subordinate relationships offers a caveat: “Top-level management is rarely visible,” which means senior employees are “not very accessible” to those at lower levels. As for promotions, they come “slowly,” and a consultant says they’re “based on who you know before acknowledging what you know.” What’s more, “your performance and pay is typically not associated with a promotion, but rather a fixed percentage pool that each manager has to divide among his staff.” That means that “if you have a lot of strong performers” working under a given manager, “it gets challenging to talk about our pay-for-performance belief and raise the bar for performance the next year.”

NERA Economic Consulting

50 Main Street, 14th Floor
White Plains, NY 10606
Phone: (914) 448-4000
Fax: (914) 448-4040
www.nera.com

LOCATIONS

White Plains, NY (HQ)
22 offices in 11 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Antitrust & Competition Policy • Commercial Litigation & Damages • Communications • Employment & Labor Economics • Energy • Environment • Financial Risk Management • Healthcare • Intellectual Property • Market Design • Mass Torts & Product Liability • Postal Services • Regulation & Public Policy • Securities & Finance • Statistical Sampling & Analysis • Survey Research, Design & Analysis • Transfer Pricing • Transport • Valuation • Water

THE STATS

Employer Type: Subsidiary of Marsh & McLennan Companies, Inc., a Public Company
Ticker Symbol: MMC (NYSE)
President: Dr. Andrew S. Carron
2008 Employees: 630
2007 Employees: 600
2007 Revenue: \$4.9 billion*
2006 Revenue: \$4.2 billion*

*All Oliver Wyman Group divisions

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#1 – Economic Consulting
#10 (Tie) – Energy Consulting

Quality of Life

#8 – Travel Requirements
#14 – Hours in the Office

Diversity

#12 – Diversity for Women
#14 – Best Firms for Diversity
#17 – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- Academic culture
- "Individual initiative is rewarded and encouraged"
- "Flexibility in terms of work location and hours"
- Little to no travel required

DOWNERS

- "Glass ceiling—you need a PhD to advance"
- "Insufficient pretraining for specific practice areas"
- "Lack of clearly defined career paths"
- Limited community involvement

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.nera.com/NERA_Challenge.asp



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Statistical, smart"
- "Geeky"
- "Top company for economic analysis"
- "Life = office"

THE SCOOP

Like Russian dolls

NERA Economic Consulting is an arm of Oliver Wyman Group, which is itself a subsidiary of professional services firm Marsh & McLennan Companies. Nestled in these layers of consulting, NERA specializes in providing economic analysis and advice to corporations, governments, law firms, regulatory agencies, trade associations and other entities facing issues of competition, regulation, public policy, strategy, finance or litigation. Some of the firm's practice areas include antitrust, securities, complex commercial litigation, energy, environmental economics, network industries, intellectual property, product liability and mass torts, and transfer pricing. The company, headquartered in White Plains, N.Y., maintains 22 offices in 11 countries worldwide, and fields a staff of more than 600.

Dr. J and ... Dr. Irwin

The company was founded as National Economic Research Associates in 1961 by Dr. Jules Joskow, an economics professor, and Dr. Irwin Stelzer, an economist. The firm tested the commercial applicability of econometric analysis, finding success immediately and eventually carving out a niche in the consulting world. It was acquired by MMC in 1983. Stelzer left the company a few years following this absorption, but Joskow stayed on, serving as chairman of the board for several years and acting today as a "special consultant."

Do you swear to tell the well-informed truth?

Due to NERA's close work with clients on matters of regulation, dispute resolution and litigation, its consultants frequently act as expert witnesses. For example, in February 2008, Senior VP Dr. Robert Mackay was instrumental in a court decision denying class certification (a requirement for the viable launching of a class-action suit) in a variable annuity case. The proposed suit alleged that Lincoln National Life Insurance Co. withheld key tax-related fee information from purchasers of variable annuities, an investment tool for accumulating tax-deferred savings. Mackay argued, based on his research, that annuities fees are not affected by disclosures, or the lack of disclosures, of tax redundancies. He additionally showed that the plaintiff's expert had no estimate, nor any methodology for finding an estimate, of the alleged extra charges.

In another example, the testimony of another senior VP, Jeffrey Baliban, was used by the Supreme Court in August 2007 to produce an opinion on the constitutionality of restrictions on a labor union's use of nonmember fees. Baliban had addressed an earlier trial court on behalf of the state of Washington, which was bringing suit against the Washington Education Association (WEA), a teacher's union, for misusing union member funds to further its own political agenda. The WEA countersued on the grounds that it was an infringement of its First Amendment rights, but the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Washington, partially on the basis of Baliban's assertion that the WEA had not kept adequate records to prove its stance.

NERA staff have also served as expert witnesses in cases investigating firearms, asbestos, franchise contracts and medical device claims, relying on scientific theory and mathematical models to drive their testimony. Consultants perform duties away from the stand, as well, prepping clients for their own upcoming testimony or depositions, and providing them with precise assessments of damages and analysis of an opponent's claims.

Trusted in antitrust

NERA consultants also frequently go to court over antitrust issues. They advise clients and their attorneys, as well as governments and regulators, during investigations of alleged monopolization, abuse of dominant position and market power. To build their case, the firm looks into market definition and market power, market structure and entry conditions, pricing and other conduct-affecting competition, profitability and damages, and, like in Mackay's case, the viability of class certification. For effective service, NERA consultants must consider the merits of allegations arising from foreclosure and exclusionary conduct,

tying and bundling, refusals to deal, vertical restraints, collusive behavior, essential facilities and anticompetitive pricing behavior.

A running tally

To stay on top of the intense litigation side of its business, NERA tracks case filings and settlements in shareholder class-action suits, and publishes a report on its findings twice a year. The December 2007 edition wielded the rather bulky title, “Recent Trends in Shareholder Class Action Litigation: Filings Return to 2005 Levels as Subprime Cases Take Off; Average Settlements Hit New High.” Obviously not one to bury the lead, the firm revealed in the report that average class-action settlements were paying out at \$33.2 million, a jump of 50 percent on 2006 settlements. In addition, there was a large increase in the number of cases—207 versus 131 the year before—brought about in large part by litigation over subprime mortgage-related collapses. The study also found that so-called mega-settlements (those worth over \$100 million) have been growing as a percentage of all settlements over the past decade. Prior to 2000, less than 2 percent of settlements reached the “mega” level, whereas the figure was up to 8.1 percent by 2007.

Added endeavors

Along with all of its consulting engagements, NERA keeps up its reputation as an intellectual leader in the industry by frequently publishing and attending or sponsoring conferences and events. In March 2008, it hosted a conference in Australia called Climate Change: What Every Company Should Do to Get Ready for a Mandatory Emissions Trading Scheme—a preparatory talk on the inevitable passage of emissions control laws. And in December 2007, the firm sponsored the Network of Industrial Economics, a forum for university economists in the U.K. meant to unveil new research, as well as to promote the free exchange of ideas between academia, business and government on topics related to industrial economics. Consultants frequently attend externally run events, too, with recent meetings including a corporate tax strategy seminar in Amsterdam and a colloquium on markets and systemic risk in North Carolina.

In the realm of letters, NERA produces white papers and articles for trade journals, and its consultants are regularly interviewed for such articles. Several NERA staffers collaborated on the February 2008 publication, “China Product Recalls: What’s at Stake and What’s Next,” which dissects the surrounding details of the recent recalls of Chinese pet food and toothpaste. The firm also puts out its own bimonthly journal on antitrust issues called *Antitrust Insights*, plus similarly motivated newsletters on global energy regulation and telecommunications. All such works are available through the company’s online eLibrary.

GETTING HIRED

Economics is essential

It should come as no surprise that insiders advise candidates to “be prepared to talk about economics” when interviewing at NERA. Through the “organized, methodical and thorough” hiring process, a senior consultant reports, “we seek both innate analytical ability and acquired knowledge in key areas.” Typically, qualified applicants go through “one day of interviews with four or five people.” Junior-level candidates straight out of undergrad usually have an initial on-campus interview as well, and may also need to submit “recommendation letters and a writing sample.” Classic case questions sometimes come up in interviews, but generally new college grads should just “expect various quantitative questions.” A recent hire says interviewees may also be “given a spreadsheet and asked to find errors,” and will usually have “a conversation about financial, economic or statistical theory.” At the senior (PhD) level, candidates are more often found “by referral or at American Economic Association meetings,” and they have to give “an hour-long presentation on their research and talk to approximately six people.”

NERA additionally sponsors a summer internship program that insiders call “rewarding,” saying it gives participants “really good experience working on interesting projects.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Cool geeks, or just plain geeks?

To get a sense of NERA's culture, says one analyst, "Think along the lines of getting paid to attend graduate school." She adds, "NERA seniors are very reminiscent of college professors." In fact, we're told that "a lot of vice presidents at NERA are former professors"—and "every now and then, they revert to their dry erase boards." This "academic and collegial" environment suits many to a tee. A senior vice president cheerfully reports, "There is a tremendous emphasis on getting the theoretically correct analysis." Others say NERA is good at straddling the line between being "intellectually exciting" and "friendly and collaborative." "We love geeks who are also cool," reports an analyst. A senior staffer states, "The culture is that of smart people who can execute and communicate to get ahead," and a cohort adds that "everyone's opinion counts, and there is a lot of respect toward all employees." A senior analyst echoes, "It's a very open culture—a fair amount of communication occurs between senior/middle management and analysts." While some do warn that the firm is "very political" and "extremely hierarchical," others are glad that "it's not too competitive for comfort."

Some respondents, however, feel that all the emphasis on academia makes the culture "stodgy." A recent hire says that because "programming is a highly valuable skill," from his perspective the culture is "nerdy and methodical." A colleague suggests that the firm is "a very sterile space, without much energy," adding, "This likely has to do with the nature of the work and people that are hired." Or as a senior consultant puts it, "There is no drama at the office," which for him makes it "a happily boring place to work." Happiness seems to be what a few NERA-ites have found; according to a senior source, "Many researchers have met and married another researcher while working here."

Supervisors are a mixed bag

Most insiders do agree that there is an "open-door policy on a 360-degree basis" at NERA, and "anyone can access anyone." In fact, claims a vice president tooting his own horn, "NERA is defined by collegiality among the senior leadership." That being said, we're also told that "supervisors can vary dramatically." One happy-go-lucky analyst reports, "I just got lucky and got the best boss you could hope for," but adds, "this is hit-or-miss," noting that on the other extreme, "you could get stuck with people who love to make others' lives miserable." A respondent who falls into the "miss" category complains, "Supervisors give you work and tell you to do it. You do it and give it back to them, and never hear about it again." In her experience, "there is very little room for strategizing or discussing ideas."

Similarly, the opportunity to interact with clients "varies by group." One analyst warns that, as far as he's aware, "there is very little to no interaction between NERA analysts and clients." But another remarks, "Some junior staff have immediate interaction with the seniors and clients, and some never do during their entire employment."

Swap offices at will

One way to shake things up a bit is to test out the view from another office. A senior analyst explains that there is "flexibility between offices"—which means that although he's based in D.C., he is "able to work from the NYC office whenever" he chooses. Aside from these office swaps, "travel is limited almost exclusively to client meetings, and is limited to more senior staff members." While analysts tell us that they do "almost no travel," a senior vice president shares, "I do work-related travel about 10 times a year," which she describes as "delightful."

Flexible, but also unpredictable

At all levels, though, staffers concur that the hours at NERA "are reasonable" and "not too burdensome," albeit "deadline-driven and sometimes unpredictable." Workweeks tend to be around 40 to 50 hours, and a senior analyst says the "hours are very flexible as long as you get work done, bill 40-plus hours a week and meet deadlines."

However, while some believe this flexibility means they are “able to attend extracurricular activities after work,” others say “it is close to impossible to predict project emergencies,” which disrupts their “ability to plan things during the week.” “Most of the time, most of the people at the firm are out the door before 7 p.m.,” describes a New York-based staffer. “But,” he adds, “every night there are teams working past midnight.” Still, a senior analyst claims “NERA does a very good job of being reasonable when project work permits,” adding, “When it doesn’t, everyone pulls together to help.” The firm is also “receptive to letting people work from home,” and a few higher-ups say they “work a four-day week”—in fact, we’re told that “most of the senior women” have this sort of arrangement.

It’s not unusual for staffers to go a few weeks without being billable. An associate analyst says it “can be very boring when work is slow,” which she warns “is frequent, depending upon the group you are in.” Then again, a senior analyst shares that, in his experience, “even in the three weeks I was unbillable, I was able to fill time with quality training.”

Bright enough without extra classes

And while we’re on the subject, NERA offers “a number of ongoing professional development programs for all levels of the staff,” although “most learning takes place on the job.” An analyst explains, “We had one week of official training, and three months of training presentations after that.” Otherwise, says another analyst, “NERA is very much initiative-driven: You learn as much or as little as you would like to,” though a co-worker notes that “the firm is constantly looking at ways to increase training at all levels.” Some say “the official training is more tedious than anything else,” and the “official training at the senior level is not of much use,” but others insist the training programs are “truly outstanding.” As one senior consultant puts it, “We have enough bright people that we can learn things quicker ourselves than by attending a class of some sort.”

PhDs required for promotion

For those who do have a yen for more school, though, a New York-based consultant says NERA “provides truly outstanding compensation for the amounts spent on studying, e.g., it pays (conditional loan) for all MBA or other graduate degree expenses (tuition, books, all application fees, etc).” Plus, adds a senior analyst, “The exposure you get to clients and internal company data offers both the wide angle and precise way an industry works. This lends itself well to advancing on to other degrees, such as PhD, JD and MBA.”

And options for higher-level schooling are critical, says a senior analyst, since “very few NERA employees progress from the researcher level to the consultant level without first earning a PhD in economics. As a result,” he continues, “though promotions occur quickly over the first few years of employment, NERA is generally not a viable career option for BA hires.” PhD candidates can expect a “five- to 10-year path to become an officer.” An analyst details the journey for junior, non-PhD staffers: “There are four levels for non-PhD-related work: 1. research associate (one year); 2. associate analyst (one year); 3. analyst (one to one-and-a-half years); 4. senior analyst (one to one-and-a-half years).” He adds, “You get a raise every six months during your first two years of employment.”

Longer hours, bigger paychecks

With regard to salaries in general, explains a newbie, “We bill by the hour, so people tend to stay longer to improve compensation.” Also, “hours are the only factor used to calculate your bonus.” That being said, some complain that “bonuses for working overtime are too low.” Overall, though, most rave that “salaries are great,” and a senior analyst notes, “I doubled my starting salary in three-and-a-half years,” adding, “I will be receiving a share of a project’s profits to compensate me for bringing the business to the firm.” A vice president agrees that NERA’s “entrepreneurial culture” means there’s “no limit to financial rewards for growth and profitability.” Perhaps because of that, a senior consultant warns, “compensation rules are a black box, and you never know how it’s calculated.”

Apples in the Big Apple

In terms of additional incentives, staffers mention a “stock investment plan,” “a profit-sharing-based 401(k) contribution,” “defined pension,” life and health insurance, and “profit sharing as part of the bonus, but only to vice presidents and above.”

Other perks include: “sponsorship of any proposed sports team (corporate softball, dodgeball, etc.),” “taxi service while working late” and an “annual three-day summer conference with families (and clients) for select seniors.” Plus, adds a senior analyst, “The holiday parties might not be high profile, but they are a great time and very well run.” In New York, there is “free fruit laid out in the kitchen every morning,” “free vending machine snacks (candy, chips, cereal) and soda,” and “breakfast every Friday.” However, a Washington, D.C.-based staffer moans that his office only has “cheap coffee,” and opines, “It seems that the firm constantly tries to cut corners on the smaller offices.

Pro bono practice

We’re told that community outreach programs differ among offices as well, with New York again taking the lead. Staffers in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and Chicago say activities in their locations are “very limited.” A D.C.-based respondent comments, “I have tried to enhance community involvement from the bottom up. Initial support was strong but never moved forward.” In New York, though, the firm sponsors “local high school science fairs” and participates in events such as Everybody Wins!, New York Cares Day and Stride Against Breast Cancer. A senior vice president adds, “NERA organizes pro bono consulting projects so that our staff can get testifying experience.”

“Merit” is the word

Within the NERA community, a Washington, D.C.-based consultant admonishes that there is “only one woman partner.” But many New Yorkers say the situation in their office is different. While some note that they “find no conscious effort to help promote women,” most agree that the firm has “equal representation of women both at senior and junior levels.” A female vice president in the Big Apple is proud to report that “a woman heads up our largest practice area, securities, and women account for 50 percent of the officers in that practice.” She adds that, from her perspective, “the firm doesn’t care what you are (gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnic group), as long as you’re smart, hardworking and honest.” Another female analyst in New York agrees emphatically, “I have one word for you: merit. That is the driving force at this firm.”

Similarly, we’re told that although there’s “no affirmative action” at NERA, there’s “also no bias whatsoever.” A consultant insists that the firm has “people working from probably over 30 to 50 different cultures and ethnic groups, from all over the world.” Still, a vice president comments that while NERA is “very diverse at the junior level,” it is “less so at the senior level.”

And again, although NERA doesn’t “go out and do any outreach,” notes an analyst, “there are people at work who are openly GLBT, and we are pretty welcoming.” Another agrees, “There’s no need to disclose sexual orientation, but there are plenty of people of all orientations working at NERA.” A senior analyst reports that “NERA was presented with a proposal to endorse a GLBT NERA affiliate group in September 2007. Currently, NERA is taking the proposal under consideration but has yet to formally endorse the proposal.” In a positive step, though, the firm offers the “same benefits for domestic partners as for spouses.”

Navigant Consulting, Inc.

30 South Wacker Drive
Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: (312) 583-5700
Fax: (312) 583-5701
www.navigantconsulting.com

LOCATIONS

Chicago, IL (HQ)
Offices in 39 cities

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Operations Advisory
Claims Services
Corporate Finance
Discovery Services
Disputes
Finance & Accounting Advisory
Government Contractor Services
Investigations
Risk Management & Compliance
Technology Advisory

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: NCI (NYSE)
Chairman & CEO: William M. Goodyear
2008 Employees: 2,600
2007 Employees: 2,539
2007 Revenue: \$767.1 million
2006 Revenue: \$681.7 million



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "On the rise"
- "Hodgepodge"
- "Supportive of and excited about recruits and new hires"
- "Overweight on management; internal systems not yet worked out"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#8 – Energy Consulting

UPPERS

- "Big-time clients without big-time hours"
- Highly social atmosphere
- "Good compensation"

DOWNERS

- "Lack of recognition for 'extracurricular' activities (non-billable work such as recruiting, community building, event planning, etc.)"
- Legal document review "can be very boring"
- Weak mentoring program

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.navigantconsulting.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Carefully steering clients

Navigant Consulting focuses on risk management and guidance during periods of conflict or change (regulatory or structural). Working with clients in the construction, energy, financial services, insurance and health care industries, as well as the public sector, the firm provides dispute, investigative, financial, operational and business advisory services, risk management and regulatory advisory services, and transaction advisory services. It has extensive experience assisting defendants, insurers and reinsurers in product liability cases.

The voyage so far

Navigant came into being in 1999, following the acquisition of Peterson Consulting and Barrington Consulting Group by the Metzler Group, the firm's predecessor. The combined entity changed its name to Navigant Consulting. This acquisitiveness continues: The firm has purchased more than 15 companies since 2002, picking up four major firms in 2007 alone, along with other scattered assets. The largest of the 2007 acquisitions was that of Troika (UK) Ltd. in July. Troika, formerly a London-based consultancy, catered to the financial services and insurance industries, providing operations performance improvement, and product and distribution strategies, among other services. Navigant was drawn to the deal, for which it paid \$43.9 million, as a means of expanding its global presence and enhancing its offerings to the financial services market.

Two other acquisitions came in June 2007—AMDC Corp., for \$16.7 million, and Augmentis PLC, for \$16.2 million. AMDC, based in Chicago, provides strategy and construction consulting to hospital and health care facilities, and was picked up to boost Navigant's offerings in that sector. Augmentis PLC, a consulting firm in Birmingham, England, advises the public sector on infrastructure projects. The purchase was attractive to Navigant as a means of further developing its activities in the U.K. public sector. This was also the motivation behind the first transaction of the year, which came in January, when Navigant shelled out \$11.9 million for Abros Enterprise Ltd. of London, another provider of consulting services to the U.K. public sector.

Navigant, listed on the NYSE, brought in \$767.1 million in revenue in 2007, an increase of 12.5 percent from 2006's \$681.7 million. It employs a staff of more than 2,600, and operates through offices in nearly 40 cities—primarily in the U.S.—but with locations scattered throughout Canada, the U.K. and Asia. Aggregate activity outside of the U.S. accounted for less than 15 percent of revenue in 2007.

Rooting out corruption

Perhaps the most difficult and damaging conflicts and disputes any organization can face are those that come up internally. Navigant offers investigative services to address these issues, whether they arise from fraud, corruption or the less headline-grabbing, but nonetheless taxing, challenges of compliance. The firm has a staff of experts, among them CPAs, certified internal auditors and certified fraud examiners, with the experience in forensic accounting, fraud examinations, internal audit and litigation support that is essential to undertaking effective corporate investigations.

The goal of any investigative engagement is to help resolve critical situations promptly, minimizing possible damage to operations, reputation and shareholder value. To that end, Navigant provides advice and analysis throughout the process, and evaluates compliance programs designed to prevent and detect future problems. When appropriate, the company will also parley when appropriate with stakeholders and oversight bodies. These services are offered internationally, tackled by teams that fit the project, no matter the cultural, linguistic or logistical needs.

Detective stories

Taking its investigative expertise to the page, Navigant produces *Investigations Quarterly Magazine*, a custom publication that looks into the current state of corporate regulation, potential transgressions and the best way to manage that kind of internal risk. A recent issue focused on anti-money laundering, and included a supplement on the process of corporate investigation.

GETTING HIRED

Personalities welcome

“We primarily engage in on-campus hiring practices,” says an insider with knowledge of the hiring process. “We conduct a behavioral interview on campus and then the selected candidates come for an office visit, where they have four additional interviews and a nice lunch out,” a colleague reports. The hiring process is likely to look something like this recent hire’s experience: “The hiring process is very enjoyable compared to many other consulting interviews. I had one interview on campus, and then I was invited to visit the Navigant office, where I had four more interviews accompanied by an informational pitch by the company. The interviews were all behavioral-based, so there were no intimidating case questions. Also, Navigant does a good job of assigning recently hired ‘buddies’ during the interview process, so I had someone who I could talk to and ask questions to throughout the interview process.” The fact that the interview contains no case studies will likely come as a relief for many candidates, but some consultants at Navigant aren’t overly happy with that. “As it stands,” says a senior consultant in Chicago, “it is largely just a personality test.”

Navigant then visits the campus where “we select the best candidates and have a 30-minute, first-round interview. Then they may be invited for an interview in the office where they meet with three people and are taken to lunch. All interviews are behavioral, no case studies.” The firm recruits at “top universities in every region of the U.S.,” according to a staffer in Washington, D.C., but the firm’s regional setup means that, while resumes from all over are accepted at any office, teams from the offices closest to specific colleges will conduct the interviews. As an example, the Philadelphia office recruits at the likes of Villanova and Lehigh, while the folks in LA travel to institutions such as USC, UCLA, UC Berkeley and Claremont. Not to worry, though: “If your school is not on the campus interview list, you can apply online and most likely have one or two phone interviews and then an office visit/interview.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Youthful exuberance

Ask a Navigant consultant for one word to describe the company culture, and he’s likely to hit on the term “young.” An insider in Washington, D.C., notes, “Navigant Consulting is a firm of young, intelligent consultants given the freedom to explore their professional creativity to solve and meet client needs.” So this much we know—young professionals abound, especially, it would seem, in D.C., where another colleague applauds the fact that “most people are friendly, young and willing to help peers.” With those young people, an LA-based cohort says, comes a “strong sense of community,” where “everyone gets along well” and people “work hard and play hard.” Part of that comes down to the fact that “we really emphasize a personality fit while recruiting, so I feel that pretty much everyone at the company has enough social skills to create a pleasant work environment.”

Other insiders, however, feel that all that youth—both personal and corporate—comes with a price. “The culture at NCI is definitely under construction,” says a consultant based in San Francisco. “With so many practice areas and geographic locations, as well as recent acquisitions and mergers, it is difficult to identify a universal culture to represent NCI. In the San Francisco office, it seems to be one that values work/life balance and one where each individual is valued and respected, regardless of level.” An employee in Austin, meanwhile, agrees that the culture “varies from office to office,” and paints a picture of his workplace as a “very people-oriented” place with “business casual” attire, where colleagues “often work in groups.” In Chicago, however, a managing consultant describes the environment as “siloed,” meaning that “individual practice areas work closely,

with little overlap into other industries/sectors. This creates a more collegial/academic environment.” But a colleague in the same office doesn’t seem to think an overriding culture matters too much anyway: “I think ‘corporate culture’ is overrated. We work hard to do the best for our clients, and the way to do that varies regionally.”

Up the ladder—by merit or longevity

Once in the door at Navigant, there’s “no strict time line” for getting ahead, as the culture “is not up or out.” Consultants “do not need an advanced degree to move up,” and some insiders report that “merit-based promotions” are the norm, with the average time to senior consultant being around two years. There does, however, exist a body of opinion that “the promotion policy is ultimately based on years of experience.” According to one Chicago source, “Great performers are generally only promoted six months faster than everyone else in their peer group. It typically takes two years of total experience to become a senior consultant, and five years of total experience to become a managing consultant, nearly regardless of performance. I would say it is not so much ‘up or out’ as it is ‘up as long as you stay with the firm.’ And if you are a great performer, you will not be promoted much faster than the weak performers.” A murmur of agreement comes from a colleague: “Some people are held back from being promoted, and others are promoted when they shouldn’t be.”

Have cake or eat it—not both

Achieving work/life balance seems to be easier at Navigant than at some competitor firms. One respondent recounts being told by an evaluator that “he didn’t feel comfortable” with utilization rates above 80 percent, as “the average professional needed to dedicate approximately 20 percent of his/her time to professional development, learning and corporate citizenship,” as well as time outside of work. With that as a touchstone, it comes as little surprise that insiders mention “flexible work hours,” the opportunity to “work remotely, if needed,” and a culture based around the idea that “as long as the work gets done, there are no strict hours.”

That’s not to say that Navigant consultants can set up a regular tee time at the golf club for a quick nine holes after work. While a staffer in D.C. reports, “I generally can get off work by 5:30 p.m.,” a colleague insists that working hours “really depend upon the project. Some projects dominate your life, others are 8 to 5.” An insider in Chicago concurs, stating, “When a deadline is approaching, it is not uncommon to have to work on a weekend, but usually these are long-term projects, so the number of weekends worked is few. We are compensated for our time through incentive compensation on both a monthly and annual basis. I have never been on a job that put pressure on me to cancel vacation plans, or anything similar, in order to work over a weekend. Managers are understanding of the value of personal time, and encourage vacations and time off.”

Still, not everyone is happy with the firm’s approach, with plenty of evidence out there to back up a consultant’s claim that “work/life balance has less to do with the firm as a whole and more to do with the managers and directors you work for.” In New York, for example, a source gripes, “They say they support a work/life balance, but they don’t. They expect you to cut into personal time to finish work obligations, but don’t allow you to stay at home if you’re ‘on the beach.’” In D.C., meanwhile, one staffer points out that it’s all about priorities: “I sacrifice utilization rates for a happier work/life balance. My salary suffers because of this choice, and I fear the reputation it creates with my peers.”

Don’t count on the air miles

Several respondents confess to not traveling at all in their roles, while others point out that the extent to which travel is required “completely depends upon office location and project.” That seems both obvious and reasonable—as does the fact that the extent of travel depends largely on individual preference. “If one expresses the desire to travel,” says one insider, “they are often put on a traveling engagement,” while a co-worker notes, “I am often asked if I am OK with the amount of traveling that I’m doing, and we have flexibility to pursue local projects to avoid travel if we choose.” Those who do enjoy travel are advised not to count on that as a means to boost income and perks, however; a consultant in New York points out that those who “do travel extensively don’t receive the perks that our competitors offer.” That’s partly because “travel time is not billable, so we must have work to do on the plane to stay billable.” The consensus seems to be that, for those who want it travel is there, but not so much as to

make life unbearable. Or, as one respondent puts it, “We travel just enough to keep it interesting and enjoyable. You make premier status, not the million-mile club.”

Fair-ish compensation

All told, the compensation packages at Navigant seem to be on par with industry standards, although some consultants feel the firm could do more to address cost-of-living issues in more expensive cities. Perhaps that’s why one insider in New York complains that salary and bonuses are “not fair across practices, office or levels.” A co-worker, however, reports that “my compensation this year was better than expected. I believe my company was trying to make an adjustment for the high living standards in New York City. The raise I got may not be the same across the nation. I would also say that the firm focuses on solid 10 to 12 percent raises every year, rather than big bonuses (which aren’t that great).” Staffers in the D.C. office also report recent attempts by the firm to bring salaries up to “market level.”

Should a consultant happen to work many hours, there is an available “extra effort” reward, which pays somewhere between \$500 and \$1,500 a month for utilization rates up to 130 percent. Other bonuses and perks include a discounted stock purchase plan, 401(k) matching up to 3 percent and health benefits. In addition, a source reports that Navigant rewards employees for pursuing professional development. “Any certifications we pursue are paid for, and once that certification is achieved, we receive an additional bonus.”

On the perk side of the equation, Navigant offers—depending on location—“free meals at nice restaurants, team outings (ranging from lunch to a weekend trip to Mammoth), summer company outings and paid time off after working a lot of overtime.” Others report additional perks such as interest-free loans to cover moving expenses, pet insurance and, when traveling on business that includes weekend time, “you have the option to go home every weekend, or you can fly anywhere else of equal value.” For new parents, meanwhile, there is “substantial paid time off,” including up to “two weeks of paid paternity leave.”

The relationship thing

A New York-based staffer points out that relationships between a consultant and his supervisors and clients “depends on the supervisor and the client.” While that may be a statement of blinding obviousness, it also sums up the gamut of responses on this issue. For every consultant who claims to “have little to no client interaction,” there is one who reckons that, “from the moment I started at Navigant as an entry-level consultant, I was interacting with the managing director and involved on client calls.”

One thing that almost all consultants agree on, however, is their relationship with upper management, with one D.C.-based insider pointing to the fact that “Navigant has instituted some great programs to interact with the upper level on an informal basis.” A Chicagoan concurs, explaining that “a formal peer and career mentor program exists, but it is the informal networks that offer the best learning opportunity. However, this means that you must take the initiative to develop these relationships.”

Training all the time

“Navigant does a good job of promoting both official and unofficial training,” says a consultant in Boston. On the formal side, the firm offers online courses and “formal conference center training,” while unofficial roles include the usual mentoring setup, as well as opportunities to pick the brains of more experienced colleagues. However, there’s no substitute for experience, and “most training is on the job,” a New Yorker insists. “I think the full responsibility of training is on a consultant’s shoulders,” she continues. “Coming out of college, a new employee must continually be proactive about getting staffed on projects of their interest, and learning opportunities that come with that.” That approach leads a colleague to consider deeper questions: “There is an official training requirement, but unofficial training—assuming one tries to learn new things on the job—sort of means all the time, doesn’t it?”

The “official training requirement” is usually fulfilled by the aforementioned courses, which apparently “have become increasingly useful,” a respondent suggests. Industry-specific training, however, “must occur through professional affiliations,”

according to a staffer, while another points out that “we are also encouraged to pursue outside training for certifications and are compensated for doing so.”

Good, not so good

Diversity at Navigant seems to be a tale of two groups—as far as women in the workplace are concerned, the firm seems to be on top of matters, with an internal women’s leadership program, not to mention that the “president of the company is a woman, and many members of the executive team are female.” Still, some employees feel that a glass ceiling is in operation in some offices. In LA, for example, “there are lots of women in the office, but men in all of the top positions.” For the most part, however, consultants seem happy with the male/female ratio, as well as growth opportunities for women at the firm. A D.C.-based staffer reports regular “mixers and events held especially for women,” while a female consultant states, “I view the firm as being receptive and open to the hiring and promoting of women—there just happen to be more men. Navigant does have a very active women’s leadership initiative committee, which works to facilitate a number of speakers’ series, as well as internal networking and social events. There is also a women’s mentor program in place for those who wish to participate.”

The firm could use some improvement in the area of ethnic diversity, however. A senior consultant in Chicago reports, “We don’t have many African-Americans, but I don’t really know how we compare relative to other firms.” Another points out that “the majority of the employees are white, but we do have other ethnic groups represented to some extent.” The source attributes the lack of diversity to the following factor: “I don’t think Navigant places a lot of importance on diversity during the hiring process, but rather takes the best candidates out of who has applied.” A colleague adds, “We do not have many minorities who work here, but at the lower level that is really a function of the makeup of college graduates.”

Lending a hand

The folks at Navigant take the idea of community service seriously, with both the firm and many of its staff deeply involved in helping out in their surrounding areas. Sources speak highly of the firm’s sponsorship of the Lend a Hand program, which allows them to “submit requests for corporate sponsorships and donations to a charity of their choice,” according to a staffer in Chicago. Involvement definitely seems to be a local affair, though, as an insider in McLean points out: “We participate in community service, but it usually depends on the office you work in and the list of already established opportunities.” However, a consultant notes, “you can participate in something not yet established with the firm.”

Regionally, the D.C. office seems to be quite active in this regard, and insiders discuss a range of initiatives from officewide drives (i.e., clothing, gift) to a blood drive to a “10K run to benefit center for heart disease.” The office also “participates in various fund raisers for United Way, breast cancer research, etc.” Additional firm-sponsored initiatives include “mentoring programs at a city school” in Chicago, “adopt-a-family over Christmas” in Denver and the opportunity to provide pro bono consulting. In LA, meanwhile, a staffer reports that “we have a philanthropy committee in the office, and we have just been chosen by the Haas school of Business to implement a community involvement program.” Just up the coast in San Francisco, however “community involvement is just starting up ... We plan to have pro bono projects as well as additional community service activities.”

AlixPartners, LLP

2000 Town Center, Suite 2400
 Southfield, MI 48075
 Phone: (248) 358-4420
 Fax: (248) 358-1969
www.alixpartners.com

LOCATIONS

Southfield, MI (HQ)

Chicago, IL
 Dallas, TX
 Los Angeles, CA
 New York, NY
 San Francisco, CA
 Düsseldorf
 London
 Milan
 Munich
 Paris
 Shanghai
 Tokyo

PRACTICE AREAS

Bankruptcy Claims & Estate Management
 Bankruptcy Reorganization
 Business Performance Improvement
 Corporate Turnaround & Restructuring
 Financial Advisory Services
 IT Transformation Services
 Litigation Consulting Services
 Litigation Technology Services

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: Philip Hammarskjold
CEO: Frederick Crawford
2008 Employees: 750
2007 Employees: 650



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Turnaround leader"
- "Hard-edged"
- "Women at very high positions within the firm"
- "Workaholics"

UPPER

- "Interim management opportunities"

DOWNER

- Could do with "better IT support"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

E-mail: careers@alixpartners.com

THE SCOOP

A shot in the arm

AlixPartners is a Detroit-based consultancy known for its ability to reverse the fortunes of struggling corporations. This process, known as turnaround, is present in most of the firm's practice areas, such as bankruptcy reorganization, litigation consulting, business performance improvement and, most obviously, corporate turnaround and restructuring. Change is effected not only through consultation and advice, but in some cases through the appointment of an AlixPartners professional, on an interim basis, as chief restructuring officer or some other C-level position in the client's executive ranks—a kind of inoculation against the microbes of failure. The CRO tackles remedies and improvements, while the natural officers continue with the daily functions of the enterprise. Of course, turnaround is a difficult proposition, and the firm shares some of the risk through what it calls success fees—payments that align compensation with results.

Inside job

The injection of AlixPartners consultants into a client's executive roster is something of a trademark of the company—founder Jay Alix himself has served as CEO, COO and CFO of foundering clients. A restructuring of Tecumseh Products Company in January 2007 prompted the interim appointment of Managing Director James Bonsall as president and COO. And in January 2006, Managing Directors Ken Hiltz and Ted Stenger were named interim CFO and CRO, respectively, at Dana Corporation.

Fueled by ambition

The company was founded in 1981 by Jay Alix. Originally called Jay Alix & Associates PC, it was a small niche provider, having only 12 employees by the end of the decade, though it served some high-profile clients. In 1984, it was hired by creditors of the disgraced DeLorean Motor Co., ultimately uncovering \$100 million in hidden assets. Later in the decade it helped in the reorganization and sale of Fred Sanders Inc., a century-old ice cream maker, and Wang Laboratories Inc., a billion-dollar computer corporation. The firm began to evolve in the 1990s, taking on more staff and serving major clients, such as Unisys, Phar-Mor and General Motors' National Car Rental subsidiary, which were able to achieve true recoveries, rather than merely liquidating as advantageously as possible.

AlixPartners adopted its current moniker in 2002 as part of a rebranding to reflect the cooperative nature of client engagements. This period was accompanied by rapid growth, including a sudden penetration of Europe, specifically in London, Munich, Milan and Düsseldorf, in the space of 18 months. New offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Tokyo, Paris and Shanghai followed, albeit at a less breakneck pace (an average of one per year from 2003 to 2007). Not coincidentally, the firm's reputation enjoyed a similar growth spurt, taking on mega-projects such as Kmart's bankruptcy (for which AlixPartners' managing directors temporarily joined the retailer's operations) and the Enron debacle, in an attempt to recover investor's funds.

The power of capital

Following a major recapitalization in August 2006, investors at Hellman & Friedman LLC gained a significant stake in the company. Managing directors and employees took on substantial ownership interest as well, allowing them to share majority control with Hellman & Friedman. The recapitalization resulted from Jay Alix's decision to transfer a portion of his ownership, although the deal did leave him as the largest single shareholder. Alix saw the shift in ownership as the conclusion of the firm's entrepreneurial phase, allowing it to become “a self-perpetuating institution.”

New blood

The draw of equity ownership also had the potential to bring in top talent. In 2007, Andy Eversbusch, an ex-McKinsey partner, and Clarence Hahn, a veteran of the financial services industry, joined AlixPartners as managing directors. And in the first half of 2008, two new directors were added: Steve Aschkenase, a 20-year veteran with worldwide experience, joined the performance

improvement practice in Chicago; and Marc Landy, an expert on bankruptcy-related disputes, joined the financial advisory services practice in New York. In August 2007, Doug Barnett was brought in as CFO, toting with him 25 years of executive experience across several companies.

Talent is cultivated internally as well. In June 2008, Frederick Crawford, a managing director and the co-lead of the firm's business improvement practice, was named CEO, and his predecessor, Michael Grindfors, stepped into the vice chairman role. In February 2007, the company named high-performing Managing Directors Stefano Aversa and Peter Fitzsimmons as co-presidents. Aversa now heads up the operations in Europe and Asia, while Fitzsimmons leads those in the U.S. Additional movement up the ladder occurred in January 2008, when 11 consultants were promoted to managing director.

Bring us your living

In the last couple of years, AlixPartners has made forays into corporate consulting and litigation advisory services for healthy companies, too. Calling upon its experience with turnarounds, it has created a system called QuickStrike, which the firm says is designed for "identifying, quantifying and prioritizing high-value performance improvement opportunities." AlixPartners explains that turnarounds have taught it that "speed is always of the essence, small teams almost always get more done than large armies, and—regardless of economic cycle—cash is always king." In February 2007, the firm stated that more than half its revenue comes from assignments with healthy companies.

On top of its game

The firm's efforts have not gone unrecognized. In February 2008, The M&A Advisor, an information and publishing company, honored it as Turnaround Consulting Firm of the Year in February 2008. AlixPartners also received the project-specific award of Industrial Turnaround of the Year for its work with Solo Cup Co., a disposable food service products producer. The firm helped Solo reduce its total debt by more than \$360 million, amongst other improvements to profitability and efficiency. The M&A Advisor also short-listed the firm for Chapter 11 Reorganization of the Year for its work with Remy International Inc. AlixPartners helped Remy, an auto parts supplier, navigate the Chapter 11 process, allowing it to emerge from bankruptcy in 2007.

Individual performance is also spotlighted. In May 2008, Jay Alix was named as an inaugural inductee to the Turnaround, Restructuring and Distressed Investing Industry Hall of Fame. The honor was created by the Turnaround Management Association to preserve the legacy of those who built and supported the turnaround industry. Future inductions are expected to occur every five years. And in December 2007, the Society of Turnaround Professionals, London's premier turnaround association, named Managing Director David Lovett of London as the Turnaround Professional of the Year.

Written materials

AlixPartners, like many consulting firms, publishes studies and surveys analyzing business trends and the state of the marketplace. In 2007, the company created the Brand Power Index, a biennial survey of 6,000 consumers in the U.S. and Europe on their expectations of brands. The index covers 11 brand categories, including autos, over-the-counter drugs, fashion and electronics, and attempts to gauge the current status of a brand and to predict its future popularity. Another survey, the annual Consumer Sentiment Index, surveys more than 7,000 U.S. consumers to determine the importance of different factors in their shopping patterns. The 2008 survey indicated that low prices were the most important determinant, above convenience, customer service and even product quality.

In both 2006 and 2007, the firm conducted studies, at the request of the Cleveland Clinic hospital, ranking the top-10 medical innovations in store for the coming year. Appearing on the list in 2007 were a catheter-based robot that allows precise, remote manipulations inside the human body; a new artificial aortic heart valve that is implanted using minimally invasive techniques; and an RNA (ribonucleic acid) technology to treat patients who are unable to reach their targeted cholesterol levels with statins alone, or those who are statin-intolerant.

GETTING HIRED

A four-hour test for fit

AlixPartners lists its job openings on a single page of its web site, along with the responsibilities, qualifications and contact information for each position. Simply sending a resume will suffice for some positions, but others require a “copy of your diploma,” “transcripts” and “experience letters” to be sent as well. Similarly, some applications can be faxed or e-mailed, while others should be sent in hard copy. Details can be found on the firm’s career site.

Insiders say all qualified applicants are asked to take “what is known as ‘the Jerry Spencer test,’ a four-hour battery that reveals intellectual strengths and weaknesses, as well as interests and personality needs.” “Following the test,” remembers one director, “I spent an hour or so getting briefed on the profile that resulted.” He adds that, in his opinion, the test “has been a great tool for ensuring that people are going to fit in and enjoy the environment.” Qualified candidates then go on to have four to six interviews over the course of three to four rounds.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Hand-picked for high quality

Insiders praise the “pragmatic,” “open,” “responsive” and “high-quality” culture at AlixPartners, where the people are “smart,” “talented” and “capable.” We’re told “the environment is one of hard work and deep collaboration with colleagues.” One managing director raves, “Working for AlixPartners is like hand-picking people I respect for their intelligence, openness and positive drive, giving them jobs they love and then enjoying the enthusiasm and satisfaction that results.” And another feels as though he is “part of a family.”

“Easy to shine”

In addition, “hierarchy is at a minimum” at the firm, which means that “everyone has large exposure to client situations and top management.” A New York-based staffer reports, “Opportunities are huge, as it is a small company and it is easy to shine here.” Plus, training is available both ‘on the job’ and “with selective and tailored” classes. A managing director explains, “Consultants at all levels are supported in and expected to do practice development to create and nurture relationships with key market segments.” He adds that “attendance at conferences, firm events, publishing and speaking are all encouraged, and the marketing group provides the kind of support that someone working 12 hours a day needs.”

And indeed, the days are long. Sixty-hour weeks are the norm, and weekend work is expected. “We work on high-impact and urgent situations, so when needed, you have to be there,” says a longtimer. Still, most staffers say the hours are “reasonable” and “in line with the industry.” Intercontinental travel is also common, and “the expectations in terms of amount of time on the road are very high.” Looking at the positives, a vice president notes that the firm makes it “quite comfortable when you travel.”

Stellar salaries

Also helping keep things comfortable are the salaries, which respondents say tend to be “generous” and “above-average.” We’re told there are also two bonuses, one which is “around 85 percent of your hourly rate for every billable hour over 40 that you work.” The other is “based on the firm’s financial performance”—reportedly, this is “more subjective,” but “rumored to be 10 to 30 percent of base.” As a result, a vice president advises, “Negotiate your base well.” Other perks include “equity participation for managing directors,” as well as a “benefits package” that is “top-drawer.” “For example,” says a higher-up, “we have great health coverage, concierge services, generous vacation, flexible working arrangements, etc.” Plus, offices are in “excellent locations.” AlixPartners shares the wealth by contributing to several charities, including *Medicins sans Frontieres*, or *Doctors Without Borders*.

BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants

1676 International Drive
McLean, VA 22102
Phone: (703) 747-3000
Fax: (703) 747-8500
www.bearingpoint.com

LOCATIONS

McLean, VA (HQ)

Offices in 37 countries around the world

PRACTICE AREAS

Asset Management • Customer Relationship Management • Enterprise Resource Planning • Enterprise Strategy & Transformation • Finance Advisory • Growth & Innovation • Human Capital • Information Management • IT Strategy & Transformation • Managed Services • Merger Integration • Operational Excellence • Oracle • Performance Management • Risk, Compliance & Security • SAP • Supply Chain & Sourcing • Systems Integration • Technology Infrastructure

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company

Ticker Symbol: BE (NYSE)

Chairman: Roderick C. McGeary

CEO: Ed Harbach

2008 Employees: 16,000 +

2007 Employees: 17,000

2007 Revenue: \$3.46 billion

2006 Revenue: \$3.44 billion

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #6 – Hours in the Office
- #11 – Work/Life Balance
- #15 – Travel Requirements
- #19 – Formal Training
- #20 – Offices

UPPERS

- “I am able to still have a life outside of work”
- “Title means little, whereas performance and intelligence count for everything”
- Good opportunities for advancement
- “Being trusted to get the job done and empowered to do it”

DOWNERS

- “The environment can be a bit isolating”
- Compensation is not on par with the industry
- “No company-sponsored holiday parties or social networking opportunities”
- No specific initiatives to encourage diversity

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Visit the Careers section of the firm's web site



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Great people”
- “Floundering for identity”
- “Consultant-friendly”
- “Midlevel management issues”

THE SCOOP

Staying on point

Maybe it's bad luck to have "bear" written above the front doors. Although BearingPoint is a large (No. 604 on the Fortune 1000 in 2008) and highly influential consulting firm with prestigious roots in the Big Five accounting firm KPMG, the last few years have not been kind—SEC investigations, layoffs, a series of management changes and more. Nevertheless, if the firm's latest CEO can engineer a rebound, BearingPoint probably has the resources and experience to be great.

Despite the firm's troubles, its client roster has remained impressive. It has a major presence in the government sector, with connections to all 15 federal cabinet departments. It has also advised the top-10 global drug and biotech companies, the top-10 global telecommunications companies, nine of the top-10 global consumer durables manufacturers and nine of the top-10 global banks. IT services form the core of BearingPoint's offerings, but it has also branched out into other areas, grouping its client solutions into four major categories: management consulting, applications services, technology solutions and managed services. It provides services for organizations in the public sector, as well as the financial and commercial industries. BearingPoint also allies itself with a number of the world's largest software and technology companies, including Hewlett-Packard, Oracle, IBM, Microsoft, SAP, Cisco, Google and Sun Microsystems.

And it all started so well ...

BearingPoint started out with a bang in 2000 as KPMG Consulting, an consulting offshoot of the massive accounting firm KPMG. Sensing its early promise, Cisco Systems pumped \$1 billion into the new firm. KPMG Consulting went public in 2002, changed its name to BearingPoint, and quickly sucked up several global branches of the recently imploded Andersen Consulting.

Almost as soon as the name change took effect, though, serious financial problems arose. It published earnings restatements every year from 2002 to 2005, and in October 2005, the Securities and Exchange Commission began a formal investigation of the firm, prying into several contracts with both corporate and government clients. Two months later, the firm agreed to pay the Department of Justice \$15.5 million for "potential understatement of travel credits to government contracts." On top of all this, the firm was laying employees off, playing musical chairs with staff positions and trimming down bonuses.

The Oracle provides

By November 2004, BearingPoint ran out of patience with CEO Randolph Blazer and CFO Robert S. Falcone, and eased them out. Harry L. You, a former CFO at Oracle, was brought in as the new CEO. The appointment gave the firm a chance to demonstrate greater transparency going forward, with You openly calling the firm's problems "embarrassing and inexcusable."

You started his revitalization efforts by replacing and moving around his C-level teammates, sacking 15 of the top-20 executives in his first 11 months. Ed Harbach, a comrade from You's time at Accenture, came out of retirement to take the posts of president and COO. At the time, Harbach had over 28 years of consulting experience in both management and technology consulting, having stood as chief information officer, managing partner and head of client satisfaction and quality at Accenture. In October 2006, Judy Ethell was named CFO.

Full speed sideways

Unfortunately, BearingPoint's fortunes didn't change significantly under You's leadership. In February 2006, You laid the blame squarely on the management that had come from KPMG, claiming they were "not competent" and "didn't know what they were doing." Settling lawsuits left over from the KPMG years cost the firm tens of millions of dollars, and Microsoft harangued it for \$10 million promised under lingering 1997 quotas. Many problems were caused by BearingPoint's computerized accounting system, a particularly unfortunate circumstance for a firm that emphasizes its IT skills. Former staff began filing lawsuits over contract violations, including former general counsel David W. Black and former COO Michael J. Black.

New year, old news

The firm finally caught up with posting its financial reports on time in October 2007. After losses had almost disappeared for much of 2006, they surged back in 2007 to the tune of \$362.7 million. For stockholders, earnings per share dipped, and after the 2007 figures were released, Wall Street dropkicked the stock into a deep hole. You's time had run out, and in December 2007, he was replaced by Harbach. David Hunter (yet another Accenture alumnus) took over as COO in March 2008, and in May, Eileen Kamerick took over as CFO, coming over from the aptly-named executive search and consulting firm Heidrick & Struggles International.

Overall, Harbach said he wasn't planning anything "dramatically different" from You. The new CEO said that he would generally focus on improving the firm's global status. With that in mind, one of his first major changes was to end You's efforts to sell the Europe/Middle East/Africa division to its managers. "[Clients] expect us to have operations around the globe," said Harbach. "You can manage a business if it's shrinking, but I would not want to do this." Also in this vein, Harbach said he wanted to continue offshoring the firm's technology and software work to countries like India and China. Other goals would be cutting expenses in legal, accounting and real estate, in addition to making sure financial records were kept tidy. However, some analysts were skeptical of Harbach's strategy, since the firm only began seriously offshoring to India and China in the last two years, meaning its farsighted competitors were several steps ahead in those markets. The firm has also been focused on broadening its solutions and industries that provide strong margins, while simultaneously looking to exit unprofitable or low-profit areas of the business.

G-men

BearingPoint is also extremely keen on securing government contracts, and 2008 proved to be a fruitful year in that regard. In April 2008, it finished the new SOLARIS (State of Louisiana Retirement Information System) pension administration system, designed to streamline and improve the entire pension process. May 2008 saw the completion of a human resources and payroll computer system for North Carolina. The system, known as BEACON (Building Enterprise Access for North Carolina's Core Operation Needs), will allow the state's 86,000 workers to access a variety of services and information on their computer. These services include changing contact information and checking current and past paycheck details. In June 2007, Kentucky chose the firm to update its retirement systems, which included design, development, implementation, testing and training, as well as data conversion from the old system.

In March 2008, the firm signed a contract with the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, which had a possible maximum value of \$115 million. The firm will support the delivery of medical solutions to members of the U.S. military, through services such as information technology, medical research and logistics, product support, and scientific and technological assessment support. One month prior, BearingPoint won a five-year blanket purchase agreement from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for products and services, including help with issuing new identification cards to all contractors and workers. The firm's contribution will include program planning and management, training, software services and change management. BearingPoint has also been working closely with the U.S. military to help spur economic growth in Iraq and Afghanistan. In recognition of the firm's work in the government sector, *GI Jobs* named the firm one of the Top 50 Military-Friendly Employers in November 2007—a formidable accomplishment, as only 2 percent of the companies that the magazine reviews are placed on the list.

Eyes on Europe

Recently, BearingPoint has been eagerly scouting Europe for opportunities. For instance, the firm's Russian office has been aggressively pursuing Russian energy companies, especially as that country's energy revenue and influence have grown in the last few years. In March 2008, BearingPoint finished implementing a corporate performance management system for Urals Energy, a major oil corporation operating in Russia. This system was designed to automate the company's management reporting. The firm worked in tandem with SAP to install the SAP NetWeaver program, as well as several smaller subsystems.

GETTING HIRED

Quick turnaround

Insiders say interviews at BearingPoint are “pretty informal,” with no tests involved, although some do mention a case study. A senior recruiter advises, “Candidates should be able to provide a five-minute summary of work experience, then specific examples of how their experience matches the basic qualifications (required skills) on job descriptions. It is helpful to have a few short, real-life examples ready to discuss, if asked.” Typically, qualified candidates have at least three interviews, although one staffer recalls that he “had a total of eight.” A recent hire says he faced an initial “phone screen with the recruiter,” then a “face-to-face team interview, where I met with the senior managers one on one.” Finally, there was a “follow-up interview with the lead senior manager and then an offer was presented.” We’re told “decisions are made relatively quickly.”

Some of the schools mentioned as recruiting targets include top universities like Notre Dame, Yale, Stanford and Northwestern, as well as regional schools close to the firm’s offices, such as Virginia Tech, George Mason and James Madison for the McLean location, and University of New Orleans, University of South Alabama and University of Southern Mississippi for the Houston office. A source remarks that the “campus team is all over, but I do think the focus is on the East Coast.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Praise that’s all over the map

“The overall corporate culture at BearingPoint is evolving,” says a senior marketing manager, but there seems to be no common theme among staffers about what characterizes it at this point. The firm gets its fair share of praise, whether for being “very welcoming,” “team-oriented,” “hardworking,” “practical,” “creative,” “entrepreneurial” or “informal.” One recent hire describes the culture as “challenging and motivating,” adding, “BearingPoint is very focused on individual performance, so each consultant feels the need to succeed. I think each employee feels like a part of his practice, and feels a certain sense of responsibility to help drive the business.” Another notes that the firm is an “eclectic mix of young and old,” with “lots of wisdom to draw from and availability of individuals to work and share ideas with on a daily basis.”

One staffer suggests that the varied perspectives may be due to “mergers” and “employee churn.” Nonetheless, there’s a positive overtone to the commentary, and most respondents agree that BearingPoint has a “great environment.”

Finding common ground

When it comes to balance, sources find additional common ground: They are largely in agreement that the firm “believes in life outside of work.” “This is one of the best features about our firm (and I have worked at two others),” insists a managing director. “Individuals are treated as professionals and are allowed to pace their own work to balance work/life activities.” He adds, “I rarely work on weekends and neither does my team. When I do, it is my choice, versus being told to do so.” Another manager comments, “I like that I can work a normal day, leave on time to do things like hit the gym and make dinner, then check in and work, if necessary, at night, rather than being stuck at the office. I feel this very much contributes to the productivity of our organization because we are trusted to get our jobs done, wherever works best.” It also helps that the firm gives consultants “the technology and resources to work from home,” and that “face time isn’t as critical as it is at other firms.”

No micromanagers here

Supervisors are also onboard with helping staff maintain a healthy balance. A recent hire notes, “My manager monitors my workload to ensure that I’m not overloaded,” and another echoes, “No long hours are demanded from management.” An HR analyst says she’s able to let her “boss know it is family time, and the item will get done tomorrow. Very rarely does a time line truly get in the way of life.”

Micromanaging is far from the norm. “I am very impressed with my supervisors,” comments a new hire. “They have a strong strategy in place and provide great support, but allow me to work independently.” Another echoes, “My supervisor is very hands-off, which is wonderful. She provides guidelines, if needed, and assists in prioritizing, but she trusts that I will get stuff to her and doesn’t breathe down my neck.” And generally, the leadership is “very approachable and responsive.”

A newbie in Texas is equally impressed with her clients, raving, “My client executives are very strong managers who have incredible industry knowledge, with an amazing support process in place and a team-oriented management structure.”

A light and local load

In keeping with the firm’s emphasis on balance, most staffers say they “work an average of 40 hours per week,” although a few say their weeks approach 50 hours or more. More than a handful of weekends spent working a year is unusual. Extensive travel is equally rare: A longtimer explains, “We try to staff locally.” A manager in Philadelphia notes, “I travel an average of one trip per month for specific meetings. The most I’m ever away from home is two nights.” A cohort in South Carolina similarly reports, “I travel about once per month, and it is a great balance for me. It’s enough travel to keep me in touch with my peers and counterparts and to keep things exciting, but not so much travel that I can’t keep up with my family’s needs.” Others agree that they “rarely have to get on a plane or spend excessive time away from home.”

Still, there are those who do spend more time on the road—for example, one senior manager says he travels “about two to three nights a week, three weeks a month.” But he also adds, “As long as I have flexibility in setting my schedule, I can accommodate.”

Critics of compensation

Compensation, on the other hand, isn’t as well received. Insiders suggest that their salaries may be a bit above average for the industry, but “raises and bonuses have historically been kept to a minimum.” A recent hire says she was disappointed to discover that “merit increases are only 2 to 3 percent.” The firm does offer an employee stock purchase plan (though one staffer grumbles that the “stock is in the dumps”), as well as both a 401(k) and Roth 401(k), with “immediate participation” but only “minimal matching.”

On point with PTO

The best perk at BearingPoint seems to be the “generous amount of paid time off days”—25 to be exact. A New York-based manager explains that these can be used “as we wish for sick, personal or vacation days.” A senior source lists that the firm also offers “mortgage assistance,” as well as “financial planning, veterinary pet insurance, commuter benefits, an employee referral program, legal services” and “fitness club memberships”—not to mention “adoption reimbursement” and “child care discounts”—although newer hires don’t seem to be as aware of these opportunities. In addition, there are “great medical benefits,” and those who do travel can rack up their “frequent traveler points/miles.” All consultants benefit from “subsidized cell phone and BlackBerry bills.”

Offices are “very clean and neatly organized,” although they’re “nothing to write home about.” A particularly happy staffer in Virginia praises the “perfect” location of his building, noting the café on site, as well as “lots of [eating] options in the area,” and adds, “The best thing is we don’t have to pay for parking!”

Hard work pays off

Training at BearingPoint is both official and unofficial, although opinions vary on which is more prevalent. For starters, there’s a brief training for new hires. “When I started,” one shares, “I attended the two-day orientation program, where I met new hires from all over the world.” Furthermore, we’re told that “BearingPoint has partnered with Yale to provide consulting-focused certification courses,” although some say “a majority of the courses are only offered to top performers.” A staffer in Virginia

adds, “There are online courses that are offered, as well as seminars that you can attend.” Others say the “unofficial” and “on-the-job” training has benefited them most.

BearingPoint also offers “market competitive career progression,” and is “not as much ‘up or out’ as some of our competitors.” “Consultants have opportunities for advancement every two to three years,” explains a senior staffer. A manager notes, “We have recently instituted a new career track program that allows for progression through multiple paths, a business/domain path, management path and technology path.” Performance reviews come twice a year, and respondents agree that “hard work is noticed and rewarded.”

Mixed marks on diversity

When it comes to diversity, one female source praises, “There are some phenomenal female leaders in the organization.” An analyst adds, “I can see all the promotions, and we are doing well promoting women.” But another staffer remarks, “We need a women’s network,” and a director insists that although “hiring and mentoring are fine,” the percentage of women senior managers and managing directors is less than ideal.

And although one staffer says, “I see equal hiring, promotion and mentoring for minorities,” others say BearingPoint is “still a largely Caucasian firm.” A manager in New York reports, “I haven’t seen anything to make me feel [diversity] is a priority.” Similarly, he continues, “there is absolutely no talk or awareness, and certainly no network around GLBT issues.”

Local over global

Some staffers say that, as far as they are aware, BearingPoint is “not involved” in philanthropic initiatives, whereas others insist the firm is “very active in the community.” The difference in opinion may stem from the fact that activities are arranged on a location-by-location basis. “BearingPoint has a strong, locally directed approach,” explains a senior manager, and “each local office chooses several charities” to support. A source in Virginia, for example, says consultants in her office have participated in “food drives, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society raffles, bloodmobiles, Habitat for Humanity and other community volunteer work.”

Watson Wyatt Worldwide

901 North Glebe Road
Arlington, VA 22203
Phone: (703) 258-8000
Fax: (703) 258-8585
www.watsonwyatt.com

LOCATIONS

Arlington, VA (HQ)
104 offices in 32 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Communication
Compensation
Data Services
Government Services
Group Benefits & Health Care
Human Capital/Organization Effectiveness
Insurance & Financial Services
Investment Consulting
Mergers & Acquisitions
Multinational Consulting
Retirement
Technology & Administration Solutions

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: WW (NYSE)
Chairman, President & CEO: John J. Haley
2008 Employees: 7,000
2007 Employees: 6,600
2007 Revenue: \$1.49 billion
2006 Revenue: \$1.27 billion



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Global"
- "Monopoly, boring"
- "Strong HR consulting brand"
- "Actuarial"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#4 – Human Resources Consulting

UPPERS

- Ongoing formal training programs
- Merit-based promotions
- Open-door culture

DOWNERS

- "Lack of opportunity" for those who don't advance early in their careers
- Few women in senior roles
- "Lip service" to work/life balance

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.watsonwyatt.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Rooted in HR

Watson Wyatt Worldwide provides human capital and financial management consulting services, advising clients on such issues as compensation, retirement, health care, insurance and investment plans. The company can trace its origins as far back as 1878, to R. Watson & Sons, a British actuarial firm founded by Reuben Watson, which offered financial services to friendly societies. (These societies can be viewed as a prototype of modern insurance or welfare programs, as they provided benefits and social services to individual laborers.) In the early 20th century, R. Watson became a lead advisor to the U.K. government on social insurance, and leveraged this experience to spread farther into Europe.

Meanwhile, in the U.S. in 1946, B.E. Wyatt and seven co-founders established The Wyatt Company as an actuarial consulting firm. This company, too, grew and expanded over time, branching out into Canada, Europe, Latin America and Asia by the 1980s and offering new service lines, including health care and compensation consulting.

In 1995, like two stems being grafted, R. Watson and Wyatt Co. formed a global alliance known as Watson Wyatt Worldwide. In 2000, the U.S. arm of the alliance was listed on the New York Stock Exchange and, in August 2005, the two companies finally fused. Today, Watson Wyatt can be found in 32 countries, maintaining over 100 offices. In 2007, it brought in \$1.49 billion in revenue, up 17 percent from \$1.27 billion in 2006.

At work on work

The company operates through five segments: benefits, technology and administration solutions, human capital, investment consulting and insurance and financial services. The benefits practice is by far the largest, accounting for more than half of all annual revenue. The segment's offerings include the design and management of benefits programs; actuarial services, such as funding and risk management strategies; expatriate and international human resource strategies, such as transfer policies and compensation mirroring; mergers and acquisitions advising; and assistance with compliance and governance.

The technology and administration solutions practice, approximately 12 percent of 2007 revenue, deploys the company's proprietary applications, generally in support of retirement and benefits administration. Some of these applications include PensionPath, a case management tool that aids in pension administration, in addition to acting as an employee self-service portal for gauging the future value of retirement benefits; REWARD, a suite of web applications that automate pay delivery; and BenefitConnect, a health and welfare technology, used for outsourcing support, that provides web-based access to enrollment tools and extrapolates the results of choices in medical spending, savings accounts and life insurance.

Human capital services, also contributing 12 percent of revenue in 2007, focuses on effective attracting, retaining and motivating of employees by determining proper compensation, guiding talent development and optimizing organizational structure. This practice also offers Watson Wyatt Data Services, which advises on benchmark methods through the collection of remuneration and benefits data on millions of employees in more than 80 countries.

The investment consulting segment has the fairly self-evident task of assisting pension plan sponsors and other institutional investment clients in either the implementation or management of their investment arrangements. Similarly self-explanatory, the insurance and financial services group advises on strategic and financial issues, such as risk management, market entry and asset liability modeling, serving insurance companies and other financial institutions, including major financial corporations, life and health insurers, reinsurers, self insurers, captives, banks and regulators. Each of these two segments accounted for less than 10 percent of Watson Wyatt's revenue in 2007.

Earning the name Worldwide

Making a push into new global markets often requires M&A activity, something from which the company does not shy away. In December 2007, Watson Wyatt agreed to purchase a stake, initially of 20 percent, in Fifth Quadrant, thought to be the leading

asset consulting firm in South Africa. This alliance will provide Watson Wyatt with a jumping-off point for business in Africa as a whole. Additionally, in February 2007, the firm acquired Watson Wyatt Brans & Co., a longtime alliance partner based in Holland—a move which may hold insight into the eventual plans for Fifth Quadrant. These two transactions follow similar deals and acquisitions, earlier in the decade, in Chile, Uruguay and Ireland.

Watson Wyatt has also achieved growth simply by building new offices, most recently in Dubai (in Spring 2008), Frankfurt (in March 2006) and Shanghai (in February 2006).

On the benefits beat

Because information is as essential to success as growth, Watson Wyatt regularly launches studies and surveys on employment practices. One of these, the Strategic Rewards survey investigates the primary factors affecting an employee's decision on whether or not to continue at a job. The 2007 survey revealed an unfortunate disconnect between workers and employers on what counts most in motivating and keeping talent. Stress topped the list of reasons cited by employees for quitting, whereas bosses didn't even rank it in the top five. Distilling all responses, the answer emerges: Clearly articulated expectations and faithful delivery of a promised reward lead to a happier workforce.

Watson Wyatt must learn from its own research—in 2007, for the first time, the company was named to *Forbes*' list of the 400 Best Big Companies in America.

Pension participation

Not every human resource issue stays within the workplace, however. With pension reform becoming a hot topic, Watson Wyatt has a unique opportunity to clarify discussion of, or even help define, the issue. The Pension Protection Act of 2006 altered pension law significantly, leading to a scramble by the sponsors of benefits and contribution plans to make the necessary revisions. To assist them, the firm released an executive summary of the act to serve as a guideline for meeting early compliance of the changes, which will take effect in 2008. Watson Wyatt's professional staff have also published white papers and studies on pensions, among them "Building Blocks: Managing Pension Funds in a Liability-Driven Investment World," a more technical analysis of the modern circumstances facing pension management, published in December 2007, and the "2008 Global Pension Assets Study," an assessment of the asset allocation trends in major pension markets, published in February 2008.

Getting ink

It's not solely in the company's studies and reports that its expertise can be heard. Watson Wyatt consultants are often quoted in major publications, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, as well as smaller industry journals like *Pensions & Investments* and *Human Resource Executive*. The firm also produces its own monthly newsletter, *Insider*, which addresses current policy and findings on benefits, retirement and other HR issues.

GETTING HIRED

The search is on

Watson Wyatt knows exactly what it's looking for in a consultant: Superior analytical skills and interpersonal abilities are key, as are project management skills, self-motivation and the ability to multitask. Especially sought are candidates with a degree in an analytical field, such as math, statistics or management. The firm also posts employee testimonials on its site, with firsthand accounts of what it's like to be an actuarial analyst or compensation consultant at Watson Wyatt. Candidates whose resumes make the cut can expect several rounds of interviews with managers and consultants. An insider reveals that the process consists of "four interviews, both group and individual," with "no test questions."

To find its chosen ones, Watson Wyatt visits a long list of universities, including Cornell, University of North Carolina, University of Virginia, Penn State, Fairfield University, Boston College, University of Texas at Austin, University of California, Berkeley and Yale. An updated recruiting calendar is maintained on the career page of the firm's web site. Watson Wyatt also has an internship program for college students who want to explore what it's like to work on actual projects. The firm says interns get a chance to dive right in, tackling benefits pricing, financial modeling, incentive plan benchmarking or investment studies. Interns can join the retirement group, health care, investment or compensation practice. Opportunities for interns and new graduates can all be found online, by checking out the careers area of the web site, in the "Graduates & Interns" section. Under the "Experienced Hires" section, appropriate candidates can view more senior job openings.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Surrounded by good people

The people are what make Watson Wyatt great, respondents say. Employees are "collaborative and collegial," with "positive" attitudes, and they are "fun to work with." Consultants are "very focused on keeping clients happy and having fun while doing it." The firm employs people of "high integrity and values, trust and flexibility." Co-workers are easy to talk to and are especially welcoming toward newbies. One staffer explains, "There are enough of us 'old schoolers' left around to keep the atmosphere friendly and open. We keep pressure on those who want to work with closed doors and discourage drop-in questions, which helps to bring our newer associates into the family quickly." Watson Wyatt is filled with "many very engaging and intelligent people."

The art of balance

Sources hold varying opinions about the ability to maintain work/life balance at Watson Wyatt. A few claim that it's possible, thanks to reasonable hours and being able to independently manage your own schedule. "Work/life balance is a matter of perspective," says one source, adding, "Being able to juggle the demands of home life with work responsibilities is an art. Some days one side gets more attention than the other." To achieve appropriate balance, it's "necessary to know when to push back and refocus." Some insiders contest that work/life balance is merely an idea that isn't taken seriously at the firm. Gripes one source, "Our 'powers that be' give a lot of lip service to the cause, but the reality is if you do not average 50 or more hours per week, it will cost you—either money or career advances, or both." In general, though, the firm is "very flexible," and "encourages work/life balance."

Watson Wyatt University

There are abundant opportunities at Watson Wyatt for official training through the firm's development and mentoring programs. New hires start by attending orientation, and then receive a "navigator" (buddy) and a mentor to help them get acquainted with life at the firm. For ongoing formal training, the firm offers opportunities to gain internal continuing education credits, receive executive coaching and sales training, and pursue individual courses. In addition, there is annual national training for different career levels, professional seminars on specialized topics and technical instruction in software and statistics.

Advance while you still can

Respondents are conflicted when it comes to advancement opportunities at the firm. "Watson Wyatt tries to promote from within, but it's really more focused on making the right hires, whether inside or outside the firm," according to one source. "Consultants can advance based on their own initiatives," and it's the "high-performing consultants" who move up. But some feel that if you don't move up quickly, you may be doomed. We're told that, "generally, poor consultants are counseled out," and an insider finds there is a "lack of opportunity for those who do not manage to get onto an immediate fast track." "Age discrimination is becoming a big thing. If you are over 40 and not at a top level yet, your career is dead," a colleague adds.

Lonely at the top for women

The firm earns high marks for hiring and retaining women, but sources say there are fewer and fewer women as you move up the ranks. “We hire more women than men, and advance them equally through the initial phases of their careers,” a consultant relates. But women “tend to top out at the senior consultant level.” One source remarks, “We did promote several [women] a few years ago, but that appears to have been a short-term response to pressure and has not continued.”

Kurt Salmon Associates

1355 Peachtree Street, NE
 Suite 900
 Atlanta, GA 30309
 Phone: (404) 892-0321
 Fax: (404) 898-9590
www.kurtsalmon.com

LOCATIONS

Atlanta, GA (HQ)
 16 offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Consumer Products & Retail Division

Customer & Channel
 Merchandise & Planning
 Private Equity & Strategy
 Product Development & Sourcing
 Product Movement
 Technology

Health Care Division

Facility Planning
 Information Technology
 Strategy Services

THE STATS

Employer Type: Subsidiary of Management Consulting Group Plc, a British Public Company

Ticker Symbol: MMC.L (London Stock Exchange)

CEO: Jerry Black

2008 Employees: 600

2007 Employees: 600

UPPERS

- "High level of responsibility early on"
- "Best internally supportive environment in consulting"
- Excellent principal-to-nonprincipal ratio

DOWNERS

- "Not adapting well to the changing times"
- Tiresome internal politics
- "Lack of training in technical models/methods"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Americas

www.kurtsalmon.com/content/main/body/careers/opportunities/body.htm

Asia Pacific

E-mail: recrAPAC@kurtsalmon.com

Europe

E-mail: recrEU@kurtsalmon.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Retail powerhouse"
- "No personality"
- "Unique, challenging"
- "Over the hill"

THE SCOOP

Knowledge of streams and currents

Kurt Salmon Associates is a management consulting firm serving the retail, consumer products and health care industries. KSA was founded (spawned, one might be tempted to say) in Nashville, Tenn., in 1935 as the solo operation of Kurt Salmon, a German immigrant and textile engineer. The company has since grown into a multinational operation, spanning 16 offices in Europe, Asia and North America.

Attention to retail

In its consumer products and retail practice, KSA offers supply chain management and technology solutions to clients from the entire sweep of retail and consumer goods, including clothing, footwear, groceries, pharmaceuticals, jewelry and other areas. It identifies consumer trends, optimizes pricing, facilitates market penetration, assists in brand launching, and guides mergers and acquisitions, among other services. Additionally, a team in KSA's retail practice is devoted to private equity services, offering investment thesis development, due diligence and exit support services to private equity funds, merchant banks, investment banks and portfolio companies.

Operating on health care

Though set apart from its consumer products and retail practice, the health care practice uses many of the same approaches. KSA collaborates with clients, whether large hospital systems, community hospitals or small physician groups, to determine strategic direction, explore innovations and implement change. To assist with facility planning, the firm will perform site assessment and capital planning, determine capacity requirements and form alternative facility scenarios. It may be contracted to advise the health care client on a merger or acquisition, or to model a potential market. KSA performs IT consulting in this practice as well.

Modern methods

KSA is a strong advocate for the use of innovative technology to drive success. It often helps clients select and implement software that will optimize or even automate their business processes, such as order fulfillment, project tracking, inventory management or other supply chain issues. The firm integrates IT solutions into its service to clients where appropriate, and works to develop software that meets specific needs. For example, in March 2007, KSA released version 2.0 of KSA SiteView (now known as GoalPost), a productivity management program that tracks performance, calculates incentive pay and records operational statistics, such as cost reporting and personnel effectiveness.

KSA is also prepared to advise on the value of new ideas. The firm's most recent focus for innovation and service growth has been on the Act Vertical concept. Act Vertical encourages businesses to increase the effectiveness of their supply chains through concurrent, as opposed to linear, information sharing and decision making. Leading these efforts is Cari Bunch, a KSA principal and one of *Consulting* magazine's Top 25 Consultants of 2008.

Reeled in by MCG

In October 2007, KSA was acquired by Management Consulting Group Plc, an international consultancy based in the United Kingdom and publicly traded on the London Stock Exchange. MCG, which operates through a number of specialist consultancies, including Ineum, Parson, Proudfoot and others, sought the acquisition to enhance services already branded under its umbrella. For KSA, the new parent means business as usual, only on a greater financial scale.

GETTING HIRED

It makes you Wonderlic

KSA isn't content with a resume and a smile—it puts applicants to the test. One source lists the steps in the process as “psychometric and personality tests, case study and interviews.” Among the tests given is the Wonderlic Personnel Test (famously used by the NFL in determining player positions), a 12-minute battery of basic aptitude questions meant to assess the capability of a subject to learn and adapt. A recent hire recalls, “A very intense and thorough process—I took two standardized tests, had two preliminary interviews, and then spent a half-day at the office doing five more interviews. But by the end, I felt I had a better understanding of the company and culture than any other place I interviewed at.” The firm notes, however, that it is exploring testing alternatives for undergraduate hires, and may not continue to use the Wonderlic. It further states that pencil-and-paper tests are not required of candidates with a master's degree (e.g., MBA, MHA or MPH).

Schools targeted for recruiting include NYU, Columbia, Duke, Emory, UVA, Georgia Tech, UC Berkeley, Cornell, Michigan, Penn State and Stanford.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

In good company

KSA has built a tight-knit culture. One source has found “the firm's culture is very collegiate. There is a camaraderie amongst associates of all levels. People generally like each other, and many friendships are formed outside of work.” A senior consultant echoes these sentiments, noting that the firm is “not cutthroat in the least. Everyone goes out of their way to help you with questions you may have.” Another adds that it is “also relatively entrepreneurial—people are encouraged to think independently.” Several respondents resort to the old cliché, “We work hard and play hard,” in describing the company culture, but the comments of a senior manager in Atlanta reveal the key to any good work environment: “I genuinely like the people I work with.”

Tip the scales

Staffers' work/life balance is left largely in their own hands. An insider says the firm puts “a lot of the discretion regarding travel/time commitments and workloads on the shoulders of the consultant.” A health care consultant advises, “One must be diligent about setting boundaries, while at the same time being flexible, especially during your introductory/learning period. You learn to prioritize those things that you are unwilling to compromise or let go. Once you've done this, it is possible to achieve some type of balance.” As one senior manager sees it, however, “If you only want to work 40 hours per week and have dinner with your family every night, you should look to a different kind of work. I compartmentalize—weekdays (and weeknights) are devoted to work, weekends are devoted to family and personal pursuits.”

Pack your things

Travel is the name of the game at KSA. According to one source, “In general, a consultant travels four to five days a week. There is the possibility of being staffed locally (especially in NYC), but you have to be ready to fly out on Monday and not come home until Thursday or Friday.” A senior consultant feels that the “expectation is Monday depart, Thursday night return, Friday spent in home office.” One respondent puts it plainly, “Travel is part and parcel to this job. It's how we learn about our clients and help guide them to their desired solutions. Our jobs would not be possible without it.”

Rubbing executive elbows

At KSA, client contact is fairly regular. An insider in New York observes, “Depending on the project you are on, you may get C-level exposure even at a consultant level. As a senior consultant, one of the tasks on my current project is to facilitate a weekly meeting between C-level executives. KSA only hires ‘client-ready’ consultants. As such, you may be placed in front of top-level management on day one (with some preparation of course).” A colleague adds, “KSA ensures that everyone on the client team gets intimate exposure to the client’s top-level management.”

Management within KSA itself is also accessible. In one recent hire’s experience, “Our very senior principals and managers do have busy travel schedules, but they make time to visit with all of us each time they are in the office.” A consultant in New Jersey feels similarly: “One of KSA’s strengths is how approachable all levels of the organization are. I feel very comfortable talking with my manager, principal or the head of our group.”

Rapid ascent

KSA has an established course for advancing through the ranks. A senior consultant explains, “There are expected skills for each level. Each year, we work with our reviewer to set goals for gaining the skills required to be promoted to the next level. Once a consultant shows proficiency with the skills for the current level, he is promoted.” Another insider maps it out: “Consultant to senior consultant is about two years. Senior consultant to manager, about three years. Manager to senior manager depends a lot on performance, but it’s about three years. Senior manager to principal also depends a lot on performance, but it’s about three to five years on the low side.” In one recent hire’s point of view, “Once you’re in, they do just about everything to keep you.”

Those little extras

The firm ensures that employees have more to show for their work than a paycheck. A consultant in San Francisco enumerates some of the perks and benefits: “Free phone service, Friday breakfasts and lots of fun activities, like ski trips and an office soccer team.” Another source mentions the “annual conference where all offices gather together in a great resort. After two days of conferencing, spouses and significant others are invited to join and stay on for a long weekend.” A staffer in New York notes, “We have a social committee, responsible for planning one event a month in each office. It’s a great way to meet new people and catch up with friends.” The firm also provides a “traditional benefits package,” with insurance, paternity/maternity leave and 401(k) matching.

Not quite shabby chic

Office space leaves a bit to be desired. On a scale of 1 to 10, one well-traveled source breaks it down by location: “I’d give the Atlanta office a 2, San Francisco a 3. New York and Amsterdam pull it up to an overall rating of 4, which is not great.” A colleague in Georgia laments the “quite outdated furnishings and decorating,” though one optimist describes the offices as “not too fancy, but fairly functional.” Amidst calls for refurbishing and modernization, a senior consultant shrugs, and chalks it up to priorities: “Offices are a hodgepodge of old furniture, but we’d rather have the money funneled toward a bigger bonus than a new cube.”

An open mind

KSA continues to try and improve its diversity stats. In one senior consultant’s view, “The firm has always been very receptive to hiring and promoting women. Very recently, a large-scale mentoring effort was created, and it will focus on how to better appeal to women in the recruitment and retention phases.” Another insider notes, “We have a ‘women in consulting’ group within KSA to promote women in the consulting industry.” Overall, believes one source, “The firm is moving in the right direction.” At present there are few minorities on staff, but according to this respondent, “We are starting a diversity initiative to bring different groups to the firm.” As for gays and lesbians, a consultant in Atlanta says, “We have GLBTs whose lifestyles are respected at all times, and whose significant others are always welcome at company events.”

Giving back

KSA encourages employee efforts toward charity. Individual staffers can volunteer to organize group activities, including work with Junior Achievement, Habitat for Humanity, Toys for Tots and the March of Dimes. A senior consultant reports that “KSA does several volunteer activities organized and driven by an internal group composed of consultants called The Social Authority, which organizes social, philanthropic and team-building events for the firm. Many KSAers participate in an initiative where they donate to their favorite charities around the holiday season.” Still, in one source’s view, “structured and organized involvement is minimal.”

CRA International, Inc.

John Hancock Tower
200 Clarendon Street, T-33
Boston, MA 02116
Phone: (617) 425-3000
Fax: (617) 425-3132
www.crai.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (HQ)
26 offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Antitrust Economics • Auctions & E-Commerce • Business Strategy • Capital Projects • Commercial Litigation • Corporate Investigation & Fraud Management • Damages • Environmental • European Competition Policy • Finance & Accounting • Forensic Accounting • Forensic Computing • Intellectual Property • International Trade • Labor & Employment • Market Analysis • Mergers & Acquisitions • Product Liability • Survey Research • Tax Litigation • Technology Management • Transfer Pricing

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: CRAI (Nasdaq)
Chairman: Rowland T. Moriarty
President & CEO: James C. Burrows
2008 Employees: 937
2007 Employees: 1,049
2007 Revenue: \$394.6 million
2006 Revenue: \$349.9 million



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Great financial/legal guys"
- "Resting on its laurels"
- "Great international opportunities"
- "Rigid, uncreative thinkers"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Areas

- #3 – Economic Consulting
- #7 – Energy Consulting

UPPERS

- "Flexible scheduling"
- Limited travel
- "Able to quickly take on leadership roles"

DOWNERS

- "Mentoring and training are nonexistent"
- Limited growth opportunities
- "Business development is not well coordinated"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.crai.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Crafting testimony and strategy

CRA International is an economic, financial and management consulting services firm with clients in business, law and government. The firm's work is a marriage of strategy with economic and financial analysis, whether applied to business plans, market forecasting, policy analysis, or litigation and regulatory support. The Boston-based company may be contracted for matters of the highest stakes, such as the Department of Justice's antitrust action against Microsoft, for which CRA provided expert services. The company also advised on the 2005 merger of Sprint and Nextel, and on a dispute between Visa and MasterCard.

CRA's fiscal 2007 was a strong one, with revenue approaching \$395 million, an increase of 12.8 percent over the prior fiscal year. In its annual report, the company attributed the jump to increased demand for its services in the chemicals and petroleum, energy and environment, and competition practices, as well as, ahem, "increased billing rates" for its consultants. The escalated demand for chemicals and petroleum services, much of which occurred in the Middle East, is reflected in the higher total share of revenue generated outside the U.S.—in 2007, that value was up to 27 percent from 24 percent in 2006.

Spend and you shall receive

Also mentioned in the annual report as stimulating revenue was the firm's May 2006 purchase of Washington, D.C.-based Ballentine Barbera Group LLC, a consulting firm specializing in transfer pricing services. The \$22.7 million acquisition was consistent with a larger plan by CRA to add businesses to complement its core capabilities, while also extending its operating area. The BBG addition allowed CRA to offer transfer pricing services in Holland, starting in December 2006.

Pick three

Both at home and abroad, the firm organizes its services under three platforms: finance, litigation, and applied economics and business consulting. Under the finance platform, CRA provides research and analysis, expert testimony and comprehensive support to corporate clients and attorneys for litigation and regulatory proceedings in all areas of finance, accounting, financial economics, risk management, insurance, and forensic accounting and investigations.

In the litigation and applied economics division, law firms, businesses and government agencies are offered services such as class certification, damages analysis, expert reports and testimony, regulatory analysis, strategy development, valuation of tangible and intangible assets, risk management and transaction support. The business consulting platform provides strategy development, performance improvement, corporate portfolio analysis, estimation of market demand, new product pricing strategies, valuation of intellectual property and other assets, assessment of competitors' actions and analysis of new supply sources.

Scholarly pursuits

Like many of its competitors, CRA devotes time and energy not reserved for clients to the publication of studies and reports. These range from newsletter series that highlight trends, such as *CRA Insights* and *CRA Review*, to contributions to outside journals of scholarly or industrial origin. These works may even be entire books, such as the September 2007 release of *Super Crunchers: Why Thinking-By-Numbers Is the New Way to Be Smart*, by Senior Consultant Ian Ayres. The text is a breakdown of changing methods in decision making—whereas the strongest conclusions might once have been reached through experience, experimentation or intuition, they are now often the result of in-depth statistical analysis, a process Ayres dubs "super-crunching."

Another example of CRA's prolific side is the March 2007 analysis published on Telkom's acquisition of its rival South African telecom company Business Connexion. The study, which was used in an antitrust case, examined the potential impact of the acquisition on competition.

Stand and deliver

CRA's fountain of information spills onto more than just the page. Its experts frequently present at consulting conferences and seminars. In January 2008, consultant Daniel Garrie was featured as the guest of honor at the Solution Elite Information Management Lunch-n-Learn on compliance solutions and e-discovery. Garrie also gave the keynote address at the Ziff Davis Enterprise Virtual Tradeshow on Information Lifecycle Management in December 2007. In addition, CRA sponsors industry-focused events, including the December 2007 Financial Research Association Conference in Las Vegas and the November 2007 Securities Litigation Conference in New York City.

GETTING HIRED

Regarding experience

Insiders tell us there are "two-to-three interview stages" involved in CRA's hiring process. Typical interviews involve "case studies and deep probing of your resume." The firm recruits "regionally, with local offices deciding which schools best suit their needs," a consultant explains. CRA considers applicants from top economics and finance PhD programs, and also recruits at the annual American Economic Association/American Finance Association meeting. Speaking about the firm's appearance at the AEA meeting, one source says, "They interview roughly 50 candidates about their research, then fly back about 15 to 20 of them for office visits."

Enticed by CRA's "respect for industry experience" and its "reputation in the industry," candidates choose CRA over competitors, and tell us they're drawn to the "work/life balance, salary and limited travel" requirements explained to them during the interview process.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

An eclectic balance

CRA "has grown by acquisition rather than organic growth," which has left the firm with "a rather eclectic corporate culture," a source explains. The positive side of this type of culture is that there are "many different lenses with which to view a problem." On the negative side, a consultant notes, it can be "difficult to get alignment internally." According to a colleague, "Everyone is busy doing their own thing," which can sometimes feel as though "no one cares about anybody else."

The firm does show it cares, however, in that it is committed to work/life balance and "actively makes staffing decisions to maintain a lifestyle balance." We're told that consultants work anywhere between 40 and 55 hours per week, and "as few weekends as possible." In addition, practices with high travel commitments work to make sure that "the travel pain is shared across all practice members, rather than being handed to a few road warriors." One staffer notes, however, that "travel is the nature of management consulting, so if you aren't comfortable with the possibility, you should find another career." The average project in most CRA practices lasts between three and six months, while in others, "it's more like eight weeks."

Pay could use a boost

What seems to be less balanced is CRA's compensation scheme, which sources describe as "rather unfair." One consultant explains, "At times, you see new people being paid more than you, even though you have the same qualifications and much more experience." On the plus side, the firm offers "fantastic health care," covering "almost all health insurance." There is also "profit sharing that amounts to 2 percent in good years," but the "company contribution to 401(k) is weak." Respondents say there are "no unique" perks on offer, but CRA does cover "transportation and parking," as well as "emergency child care."

The firm is also fairly lax when it comes to giving back. There is “not much encouragement” for consultants to participate in community work, “but it isn’t discouraged, either.” CRA does support “several initiatives,” though, including “charities and community events.”

Selective leadership

CRA is “not a great place for direct hires from graduate programs to start their careers,” an associate remarks. Managers are “very hands-off,” which is good for some because it makes it “possible to have a flexible schedule.” But for those looking for strong guidance, there is a “lack of management focus on growing the next generation of revenue generators.” One insider claims, “Only people who have considerable industry experience and contacts, and thus can bring in business, are valued and cared for.” In short, staffers agree that there is a “lack of clear leadership” at CRA.

Stunted growth

Currently, CRA offers “a mixture of both official and unofficial training,” but many consultants say it’s “not enough.” According to one contact, “There are almost no training opportunities and no mentoring at all.” Fortunately, the firm is “in the process of completely revamping our training program,” which it hopes will “greatly improve our training effectiveness.”

The firm could also use a similar revamp of its promotion policy. Currently, there is a lot of “unclear promotion decision-making,” and the process “seems very arbitrary.” CRA does not have an up-or-out policy, per se, but rather “more of a grow-or-go” attitude. Promotions usually come “every two to three years at the junior levels,” and “every four to five years in senior positions.” But many say the process is “frustrating and not at all transparent.”

Welcome to the white male club

When it comes to diversity, the firm claims it strives to maintain a fairly even divide, and reports that at the campus level (undergrad, MBA, PhD), it maintains a balanced ratio of male to female hires. But some sources claim that the ratio doesn’t seem to hold—nor does it seem static across all offices. According to one Washington, D.C.-based consultant, “There are hardly any women [in my office]. Even though almost an equal number of women graduate from the programs we recruit from, very few women are hired.”

The firm could also do with more ethnic minorities—again, “especially at the upper levels.” CRA “tries, but the few candidates that are available don’t choose to come here.” A consultant notes, “We do have a lot of foreign students who join right after finishing school, but it is not diverse in terms of minorities. At the end of the day, it is a white male club.”

Huron Consulting Group

550 West Van Buren Street
Chicago, IL 60607
Phone: (312) 583-8700
Fax: (312) 583-8701
www.huronconsultinggroup.com

LOCATIONS

Chicago, IL (HQ)

Atlanta, GA • Boston, MA • Charlotte, NC • Dallas, TX •
Detroit, MI • Houston, TX • Los Angeles, CA • New York,
NY • San Francisco, CA • Washington, DC • London •
Tokyo

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate
Financial
Health & Education
Legal

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: HURN (Nasdaq)
Chairman, President & CEO: Gary E. Holdren
2007 Employees: 1,600
2006 Employees: 1,035
2007 Revenue: \$504.3 million
2006 Revenue: \$288.6 million

RANKING RECAP

Diversity

#17 – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- “Early responsibility if you show initiative”
- “The leadership has vision”
- Top marks for compensation

DOWNERS

- Internal politics
- “Eliminating benefits with a ‘smiley face’ on the memos”
- “Focus on satisfying stock owners”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.huronconsultinggroup.com/careers.aspx



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Great growth”
- “Too aggressive”
- “Functional experts”
- “Still proving itself”

THE SCOOP

In good times and bad

Huron Consulting Group advises companies on operational and financial matters, offering a portfolio of services designed for times of business stability as well as periods of distress. Clients include Fortune 500 companies, medium-sized businesses, academic institutions, health care organizations and law firms (generally in connection with the law firm's service of a commercial client). Business clients are active in a range of industries, among them consumer products, electronics, energy and utilities, financial services, manufacturing, telecommunications and transportation.

The firm divides its practice into four segments: health and education, financial, legal and corporate. Consultant expertise in these segments is brought to bear on such issues as litigation, disputes, investigations, regulatory compliance, procurement, financial distress and other conflicts without clear categorization. The performance of clients in less dire circumstances is also addressed through strategic, operational and organizational analysis.

Four on the floor

Huron's health and education segment advises hospitals, health systems, physicians, managed care organizations, academic medical centers, colleges and universities, and medical device manufacturers. Services focus on financial management, strategy, operational and organizational effectiveness, research administration and regulatory compliance. Projects can also address performance improvement, turnarounds, merger or affiliation strategies, labor productivity, nonlabor cost management, information technology, revenue cycle improvement, physician practice management, interim management, clinical quality, medical management, and governance and board development.

The financial segment works on accounting and financial reporting matters, financial analysis in business disputes, and litigation and valuation analysis during acquisitions. Assistance is also given on issues related to corporate governance, Sarbanes-Oxley compliance, internal audit and corporate tax. Professionals in this practice include certified public accountants, economists, certified fraud examiners, chartered financial analysts and valuation experts.

The legal segment advises corporate law departments, law firms and government agencies, addressing issues of legal spending, client service delivery and operational effectiveness. Specialty services include digital evidence and discovery, document review and records management, in addition to law-oriented strategic and operational improvements.

The corporate segment primarily goes after performance improvement. Clients come to Huron to address and manage sluggish or declining stock prices, acquisitions and divestitures, process inefficiency, third-party contracting difficulties, nonexistent or misaligned performance gauges, margin and cost pressures, bank defaults, covenant violations and liquidity issues.

Fresh start

Huron was founded in March 2002 by Gary E. Holdren, a former Arthur Andersen senior partner who, with the help of investors at Lake Capital Management LLC, gathered the capital to form a new company after scandal and federal prosecution brought an end to Andersen. Most of Andersen's consultants fled for KPMG Consulting, but 213 chose to sign on with Holdren, permitting the company to spring into action in May 2002. By the end of 2004, revenue surpassed \$150 million, staff numbers had nearly tripled and the firm had launched an October IPO on Nasdaq. Flash forward to today, and the firm boasts 1,600 employees in 11 locations across three countries. Huron brought in \$504.3 million in revenue in 2007, a 74.7 percent leap from \$288.6 million in 2006.

Moving and shaking

According to Huron's annual report, the long strides in revenue can be attributed to both natural growth and acquisitions. The firm generally aims to buy new businesses that will expand its national or global presence, enhance its existing practices or both.

In July 2007, it spent \$65.4 million to acquire Callaway Partners, LLC, a professional services firm focused on finance and accounting projects, financial reporting, internal audit and controls, and corporate tax issues. Callaway was an attractive prospect for the company due to the boost it would give to existing accounting and corporate compliance services, as well as the addition of experienced senior staff.

Earlier in the year, in January, Huron picked up Glass & Associates, a turnaround and restructuring consulting firm with activities in the U.S. and Europe, in a \$35 million transaction. Glass represented an opportunity for the company to enhance its restructuring practice, especially through the ability to offer interim management services in sectors other than health care. That same month, Huron acquired Wellspring Partners LTD, which specializes in performance improvement for hospitals. The addition strengthened Huron's national presence in the health care consulting market.

New arrivals

Adjusting to this rapid growth requires large stores of talent. In February 2008, the firm announced the hiring of three new managing directors—Linda Cape, Kenneth Hall and David Moffat. Cape, who is based in the Chicago office, formerly worked with Cape & Associates (and KPMG before that), and brings deep knowledge and experience in health care delivery systems. Hall, once a director of business development at PricewaterhouseCoopers, also joined the Chicago office, bringing with him a skill set in sales strategy and management. Moffat, a 20-year veteran of financial services and accounting department management, signed on with Huron's New York office. Moffat formerly headed up GCom2 Solutions as president and COO. Rounding out the new arrivals is Timothy H. Hart, a dispute expert and managing director at Navigant Consulting, who came onboard in January 2008 as a vice president in the financial practice.

GETTING HIRED

Practice-dependent interview process

Huron's interview process differs depending on the position, but most commonly there are "two rounds for campus hires" and "one round for experienced hires." Once candidates pass an initial screen, typically done over the phone, they meet with "a variety of personnel within the group to which they're applying." For campus hires, there are normally "about four interviews per stage." After "three one-hour interviews," experienced hires may also have some "follow-up phone calls." Internal references can make interviews "easier," but all candidates have "multiple interviews, to get well acquainted." For some, the process proves "difficult," and some feel Huron has a "very poor hiring process." A contact explains, "Quantities and backgrounds of people are out of step with the business requirements of the practice." In some cases, "a long interview process can frustrate a candidate." Others say "the process is comprehensive," because "interviewers have defined tasks."

Differences in opinion about Huron's hiring process are probably due to the fact that "specific processes are practice-driven, so there is no single governing firm policy." Regardless of the practice, however, Huron's interviews tend to be "stringent, and are becoming more so, particularly at senior levels." One source says the process is "definitely tightening up, compared to what I underwent." Interviews are "mostly interpersonal-based" and "focused on fit." Normally, there are "no special tests," although "sometimes there is a case-based interview." Questions run the gamut, but commonly touch upon "commitment" and "your interest in the practice area you're applying to." Candidates should be able to "demonstrate solid knowledge of industry trends."

We're told Huron recruits at a number of undergraduate institutions, including Notre Dame, Illinois, Indiana, Miami of Ohio, Michigan, DePaul, Northwestern, University of Chicago and NYU, among others.

Expanded experience

One way to get a leg up on the firm's interview process is through an internship, which former participants describe as an "excellent experience." The program, which recently "has been expanded greatly," involves "weekly community service, summer-long case projects, several social outings and travel to client sites." Interns work on "large-scale engagements," and are

“given responsibility on the team.” One former intern recalls, “I was trusted with my work and with reviewing the work of others.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

The perils of going public

Insiders feel Huron’s culture has been largely reshaped since the firm went public in 2004. We’re told there is some “frustrating sameness driven by fear of stock market analysts” and that “bureaucracy is steadily increasing.” The firm “seems to be struggling to find an identity.” In the words of one source, “Huron is like an awkward teenager striving to find itself—we’re too big to be the fast-growing, entrepreneurial hotshot many employees were sold on when they were first hired, but not quite big enough to sit at the grown-up table. We try to be nimble as we once were, but are often bogged down by the stress of life as a public company, and the policies and procedures of a large organization.” Things often feel “disorganized and unstructured,” and some say the culture can feel “self-serving,” exhibiting an “every man for himself” attitude. What was “once a friendly environment has become cliquy, with different motivations.” A director from Chicago puts it plainly: “Transition efforts are the norm currently, and it is wise to expect culture clashes on occasion.”

Others have more positive things to say, calling the culture “results-driven,” “engaging” and “ambitious.” A source describes the firm as being possessed of “a strong ‘whatever it takes to get the job done’ understanding.” One consultant states, “We are a group of young professionals who work hard during the day, but have friendships outside of work. We are driven toward success, but also enjoy rewarding ourselves for hard work.” At Huron, a staffer observes, “excellence is expected, but risk is also expected.”

All-or-nothing travel

For the majority of staffers, travel is just “part of the job.” Consultants “have to be willing to travel at a moment’s notice,” which can make it “hard to make future plans.” Travel “can vary from 20 percent to 60 percent,” but most commonly, you’re on the road “Monday through Thursday, and sometimes Sunday.” In some practices, “those who want to stay local are usually allowed to work on local projects, whereas those who want to travel can.” For some, frequent “travel places a strain on relationships with [spouse] and family,” whereas others “mostly just take day trips,” and “would like more overnight travel.” One insider was “out of state for six months straight, out of my 18 months here.” Some find travel “excessive,” and say it “causes serious evaluation of whether the firm is right for consultants with young families.” Others, however, are away “less than one day per week, so travel is not a nuisance.” One respondent sums it up: “You either travel, in which case you travel four days a week, or you don’t at all.”

Discrepancies over workload

Achieving work/life balance at Huron “depends on the person, not the firm.” A contact explains, “Work/life balance is what you make of it. For a consulting firm, Huron takes good care of you, makes sure you don’t work too hard, and tells you to take time off when you are working too much.” For some, however, “the problem isn’t trying to work less, but that there is hardly any work.” But like many things at Huron, opinions vary by office and practice area. Some feel work/life balance is becoming “more and more difficult,” as “the firm is increasing out-of-town assignments.” Several sources attest to working some weekends, although one insider points out, “When I work on weekends, it is most frequently because I am choosing to pursue special projects that are beyond the scope of my required work.” Huron has “several initiatives in place to help keep balance.” There is also “a very flexible vacation policy, and people are encouraged to use their time.”

There are “no formal or informal opportunities to work from home on a regular basis.” A source says, “It seems that management struggles with this newer concept.” Fortunately, many consultants are “able to keep an 8-to-5 schedule pretty regularly.” The majority report working 45 to 50 hours per week, although some say hours can escalate to between 60 and 100 per week,

depending on the project. According to one source, “The organization is moving toward an average 50-hour workweek, plus travel.” But hours may be difficult to standardize at Huron, since many respondents say the distribution of work is not always fair, causing those who are busy to get “crushed” while others complain of “a lot of downtime.” A contact says, “We have new analysts in our group who have not charged a single hour in six months.” Some feel there is an “underutilization of junior staff,” whereas others note that the firm “has way over-hired.” Assignment length varies greatly, with consultants working on projects that last anywhere from three months to three years. But again, “some analysts and associates are unassigned for months.”

Comp could be better

Many insiders are displeased with their compensation. “The company has no idea how to reward people who do not directly produce income,” says one unsatisfied employee. Huron has “lost a lot of good people” over issues of compensation. The firm does, however, provide an “employee stock purchase plan below managing director level, and restricted stock grants at the managing director level.” A source offers details: “You can place up to 25 percent of your bonus into stock and Huron will match 25 percent of the money you put in the account. The problem is that Huron’s stock lost almost 25 percent this year, so [overall], people barely broke even and almost lost money.” A colleague adds, “Huron barely met Wall Street expectations in 2007, and the only reason it did was that bonuses were given out at a fraction of target across the firm.”

Staffers speculate on bonus stats: “Average raises for associates were 6 to 7 percent; for analysts they were 5 percent. Bonuses averaged between 5 and 7 percent for both versus targets of 10 percent, despite 75 percent year-over-year revenue growth. Supposedly, we only hit 63 percent of our target bonus pool.” Huron offers “a \$750 travel bonus to those who travel 25 nights or more during each three-month period,” and consultants receive “overtime at our hourly rate for all hours that we are billable beyond 40 hours a week.”

Additional perks include “an annual \$300 to spend on ‘personal wellness,’ which can include exercise equipment and massages.” That is in addition to “great health benefits.” Consultants also get “80 hours of paid parental leave” and “176 recommended hours of vacation per year.” They can “fly a spouse or significant other out for a weekend away,” and are allowed to “keep miles to fly someplace other than the home office.” There is a “very strong 401(k) match—100 percent of the first 6 percent contributed is fully vested after one or two years.” The firm also provides “a BlackBerry for every employee.”

Growing pains, especially in Chicago

Chicago-based consultants have a lot of complaints about their offices. Put simply, “It’s ugly in Chicago.” Consultants describe “a horrible office setup” that “gives younger employees no sense of home, as we have no desks, locker space or other kind of personal space.” It can be “hard to find an open desk, since only managers and above have an assigned cubicle.” One contact says, “It’s annoying to lug your work home every night, and fight for a new desk every morning.” And “it is so loud in some areas that you cannot hear yourself think.” To boot, the office is in the “southwest Loop in Chicago, which is not the most central location.” Fortunately, consultants there are “waiting for new space to be built out.”

In Boston, “offices are very nice,” and the digs in Dallas are “very top notch.” According to a consultant there, “They clearly spend more money on offices and infrastructure than compensation.” In Atlanta, “cubicles are very small,” and the New York space is reportedly “terrific.” The team is “in our second year in the space,” which was “very well thought out and constructed.” However, “the New York office is already filled to capacity,” so the firm “may have to consider moving again.”

Inconsistent report cards for managers

Interaction with supervisors “usually depends on the type of engagement” because of the firm’s “very horizontal organizational structure.” An insider explains, “I may work directly with an associate one day and a managing director the next. In my first two months at the firm, I attended a client meeting with a managing director, and on other projects, I have worked exclusively under a manager.” Some say the firm “provides a very nurturing environment, in which you spend a great deal of time learning from and interacting with managers and directors.” According to one source, “Supervisors work on the same playing field as

analysts. It's rare that a managing director leaves much earlier than an analyst, and it's popular for all employees to work together to achieve team goals."

Yet others feel that the firm's leaders "do not understand what motivates the rank and file," and "think it is some sort of privilege to work for Huron." The lack of personal attention experienced by some may have to do with Huron's public status. A respondent notes, "[Being public] provides us with some added visibility, but also distracts senior management." Management decisions are "not always clearly explained," and "some decisions appear shot from the hip." A contact adds, "Directors and above refuse to take responsibility for screwups." Fortunately, consultants have "great opportunities to interact with clients," and many "work with executive management on a daily basis." Others say they enjoy "regular interaction with clients that is unheard of at most other firms." According to one staffer, "The opportunity to interact with top-level management depends on your supervisor and varies from project to project."

In need of training on training

Most feel training at Huron "could use a little work." Consultants "receive some basic training, but being billable is emphasized over honing skills." We're told that the "majority of training is on the job." Huron does offer official training through its academy, but "most is very rudimentary and tired." A contact says, "The same things have been offered since its inception, with very little improvement to the curriculum." Training is "poorly planned" and tends to be "focused on entry level." For this reason, the "initial few months for experienced hires can be haphazard, with minimal guidance." Many "would like more opportunities for training and education," and recently, "lots of new hires have put a strain on experienced consultants to train them." Training in general is a "mixed bag," but many say it is "below average." A respondent claims, "Any training I have taken part in has been only marginally useful." Training sessions "fill up quickly" and are "not conducive to the skills we need," though some argue that training is "fairly comprehensive," and "Huron always encourages us to take part in it." Differences in opinion may be due to varying offerings for different levels of consultants—according to one insider, "New analysts and managing directors get great training, but everyone in the middle gets nothing useful."

Promotions are hard to predict

Promotions at Huron "vary by office," but typically, "a campus hire will become a manager within five to six years." There can be "two or more years between promotions," which some consider "very slow." A consultant's "collaboration and performance are significantly weighed in the review process," although some feel promotions are "highly subjective and variable, with no set criteria." The firm does not have an up-or-out policy, as "promotion is not required," but "high performance is expected." Insiders feel the firm's lenience about advancement is "a very positive aspect of the job, but at the same time, it allows mediocre performers to stay around." Sometimes, an insider claims, the firm is accepting "to a fault. Criteria for promotion are not adhered to, and many undeserving individuals get promoted."

But in some practices and offices, "those who do not develop are coached out." This lack of consistency makes some feel as though "Huron's promotion policy does not exist." A contact says, "The policy is not at all transparent. Guidelines exist but do not seem to be followed. Only at the director or managing director level does senior management seem to even look at candidates for promotion, so it is a bit like the Wild West for the rest of the firm." In some cases, "consultants do not advance based on merit, but mostly based on the relationships their coaches foster and how strongly their coaches fight for them during calibration sessions."

Diversity depends on who you ask

Huron consultants share varying opinions about the firm's approach to diversity. "Depending on the group, Huron's attitude toward women ranges from acceptable to lukewarm," says one respondent. Some groups, such as operational consulting, "do not have a single female managing director or director, and only a single female manager." Other practices, such as higher education and health care, "seem to do a better job at diversity." According to a contact, "Several men think they get slighted because of aggressive policies to support women, such as flexible work arrangements and promotions." Others claim the firm

is “placing too much emphasis on hiring women and minorities.” A source notes, “We are passing up on talented candidates in order to hire less qualified candidates from protected classes.” The firm is “about 50/50” in terms of the male-to-female ratio, and in some practices, “there are a lot of women at every level, including CXO.” In general, “women are treated fairly in terms of hiring and promoting,” but “there are no official programs for women.”

Some sources say Huron has a “very diverse employee base,” while others consider it a “primarily Caucasian firm.” According to one respondent, “A lot more diversity occurs at the practice group level. It’s much more limited at the executive level.” In the New York office, there are “lots of Asians,” but “no blacks or Hispanics.” The Chicago-based “group of 15 people is composed of perhaps three or four ethnicities.” A minority consultant based in that office shares, “I have never felt out of place or isolated. Everyone is friendly, well informed and keen to know more about my background, as I am not American.”

In Boston, there is a “very open culture” toward gay and lesbian employees. “There are no GLBT groups,” but “your sexual orientation does not matter.” An insider notes, “GLBTs might as well be invisible here.” The firm is “generally accepting, but that varies by region.” One openly gay insider in New York says, “Before joining the firm, I had made good contacts with several GLBT employees, and everyone stressed the emphasis and support they felt they had as a GLBT. The culture feels very accepting and friendly without any issue of integration of alternative lifestyles.” In addition, Huron “believes in benefits for same-sex partners.” A Chicago-based source states, “My partner and I share my health plan as well as my other insurance plans. Huron makes every effort to be fair toward us. At work, my sexuality is a nonissue.”

Community service directive from the top

Huron “sponsors several charities and community-service opportunities,” and consultants are “encouraged to recommend new charitable initiatives.” The firm sponsors the Joffrey Ballet, Junior Achievement, New York Cares and Habitat for Humanity, and participates in toy drives at Christmas. Consultants also “volunteer at homeless shelters, pay to wear jeans to support a charity, and participate in clothing drives and walks,” in addition to “pro bono work for nonprofits, public school systems and public transport.” The firm “highlights the community involvement of its people,” and it is known that the CEO “expects community service.” But one insider says, “On a micro level, the firm seems disinterested in community service at times. Individuals have been specifically discouraged from performing pro bono work deemed distracting or unbeneficial.” And some feel the community efforts that do take place are “not advertised well,” which weakens involvement. The majority of respondents, however, say Huron “does a good job of encouraging people to be involved in the community.”

Arthur D. Little

125 High Street Tower, 28th Floor
 Boston, MA 02110
 Phone: (617) 532-9550
 Fax: (617) 261-6630
www.adlittle-us.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (US HQ)

Paris (HQ)

Houston, TX

New York, NY

30 offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Automotive & Manufacturing
 Chemicals
 Energy & Utilities
 Financial Services
 Healthcare & Life Sciences
 Operations & Information Management
 Strategy & Organization
 Sustainability & Risk
 Technology & Innovation Management
 Telecommunication, Information, Media & Electronics

THE STATS

Employer Type: Subsidiary of Altran Technologies

Ticker Symbol: ALTRAN TECHN (Paris Bourse)

CEO: Michael Träm

2008 Employees: 1,000 +

2007 Employees: 1,000 +

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #7 – Offices
- #12 – Hours in the Office
- #13 – Formal Training
- #13 – Work/Life Balance
- #18 – Overall Satisfaction

Diversity

- #1 – Diversity for Minorities
- #11 – Best Firms for Diversity

UPPERS

- "Opportunities for rapid advancement"
- Growing quickly in the US
- "It seems like every week I'm learning about an industry that I didn't even previously know existed"
- "People tend to respect your private life"

DOWNERS

- "Not as much prestige as some other firms"
- Limited nonsalary compensation
- "Supporting infrastructure is still a work in progress"
- "Short projects make life particularly unpredictable"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.adlittle-us.com/careers_us.html



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "International"
- "Fallen out of fashion"
- "Great legacy"
- "Undifferentiated"

THE SCOOP

The original consultants

Known as the world's first consulting firm, Arthur D. Little was founded in Boston in 1886 by chemist and inventor Arthur Dehon Little (who discovered acetate) and his co-worker Roger Griffin; together, they originated the concept of contracted laboratory research. Since then, ADL has been involved in the development of operations research (a branch of applied mathematics), the word processor, synthetic penicillin and Nasdaq.

Arthur D. Little consults in areas such as corporate finance, sustainability and risk, operations management, information management, strategy and organization, and technology and innovation management. It has a roster of Fortune 500 clients spread across the automotive, chemical, energy and utilities, financial services, health care/life sciences, manufacturing, TIME (telecommunications, information technology, media and electronics), consumer goods, private equity and transportation industries. The company also serves state and federal agencies, as well as foreign governments.

Going through changes

After a corporate restructuring in 2002, ADL reduced its workforce by almost half and sold off parts of its business to firms eager to buy into the well-known brand. Altran Technologies, a French technology and consulting firm, bought the core management consulting business, as well as the Arthur D. Little name. This change led, perhaps unintentionally, to increased attention on business affairs in Europe, rather than in North America. In September 2006, this refocusing was formally confirmed by the shift of the firm's world headquarters from Boston to Paris. Moreover, German-born Michael Träm, formerly from A.T. Kearney, replaced Richard Clarke as the company's CEO.

Träm, however, has embarked on a plan of expansion for the firm, which should ensure, amidst broader worldwide expansion, that the American market will not be neglected. To this end, new offices were opened in New York and Dubai in early 2007 (reaching a total of 30 offices worldwide), and Markus Lahrkamp was brought on as managing director of North America. Lahrkamp was charged with strengthening ADL's presence in the market. In addition to its offices in Boston and New York, the firm has a third U.S. office in Houston.

Eye on sustainability

Throughout its history, ADL has been a strong proponent of sustainability. As the founder put it in 1906: "Every waste that is prevented, or turned to profit, every problem solved, and every more effective process that is developed makes for better living in the material sense and for cleaner and more wholesome living in the higher sense." This way of thinking has given the firm some solid footing, in light of global warming concerns and increased efforts at "greening" our environment.

Arthur D. Little has over 40 years experience in advising clients on the opportunities and risks in sustainability, climate change and the carbon agenda. For example, its work with a major chemicals company considered the different approaches used across the sector for carbon management. Following the project, the client began to view carbon management as a business, rather than as a compliance issue, and created a separate company—with profit and loss responsibility—focusing on carbon tracking and carbon trading.

Spreading the word

As an extension of its consulting efforts, ADL also produces research reports and studies on the direction of business, the combined effect of which is meant to raise the company's profile and mark it as a thought leader. Recent publications address such issues as pricing matrices for mobile networks, the value of research and development spending, conservationist branding and the development of broadband markets in Germany. ADL also releases a biannual publication called *Prism*, which explores key macroeconomic trends, supplies updates for ongoing company topics and reviews current conventions. A 2007 issue featured

a story on the growing support for green initiatives and the potential early action strategies for energy companies that may soon be required to reduce their carbon footprint.

GETTING HIRED

It's not enough to be brilliant

Although it's always "very thorough," there's no definitive hiring procedure at Arthur D. Little—instead, it "varies by office and by practice." A recent hire in Texas states, "Some offices have full assessment days with presentations and case interviews, and some offices are a little less formal." That being said, it's generally the case that "business analyst applicants have to do a presentation in front of a group of about five people of various seniority levels in the firm." A newbie in New York remembers, "I had several phone interviews and then a half-day interview at the office. I had to do a 30-minute presentation to a group on my qualifications and my fit. I then had three case study interviews with managers and partners." A colleague from the same office reports, "The hiring process usually consists of two phone or campus interviews, half behavioral and half case question. If the candidate is asked to the second round, they will come into the office to give a 20-minute presentation about themselves to ADL employees. Then they will have three more interviews, with the focus on case questions." A manager on the hiring side explains, "We try to get to know our potential new colleagues as well as possible from the personal side, and also from the intellectual side. They need to fit our team in all aspects. It is not enough to be brilliant; you have to have a great personality, too."

Potential counts

Staffers say the hiring process "can be initiated through our web site" or, "for those coming out of college, through on-campus recruiting." In particular, the firm recruits at MIT, Rice, Texas A&M, NYU, Columbia and Harvard, among others. "However," notes a recent graduate, "that does not imply that we have some sort of elitist policy where we only hire people from those schools. If an applicant has relevant job experience and shows potential, then we will most definitely put him through the interview process just like everyone else."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Age is but a number

ADL may be the "oldest firm in the consulting industry," but that hardly means its staffers are stodgy. Insiders describe their colleagues as "energetic," "ambitious" and "driven," as well as "laid-back and fun to work with" (not to mention "intelligent"). A manager explains, "The culture has a great combination of entrepreneurship and professionalism in a work hard, play hard environment." And a source in Houston adds, "There is the feel of a small, entrepreneurial company, but with the institutional knowledge and resources of a global company." "We work hard," comments another staffer, "but we also have office events and outings to know each other better. My professional colleagues are friends as well." In fact, reports a New York-based manager, "We try to do as many out-of-the-office plans as possible."

We're also told the firm has a "very open culture" and promotes a "very positive and collaborative environment." The atmosphere is "very friendly" and "very collegial," the "people are genuine" and "everyone helps each other out." "There is virtually no hierarchy" in the "flat organization," and "people feel like they can approach anyone in the office." A business analyst states, "We have an open-door policy, and professionals of all career stages interact well together."

Flexibility, not face time

The good cheer continues when it comes to work hours: Respondents say “most people at ADL seem to have a very good work/life balance,” and working on the weekends “is more the exception than the norm.” A business analyst comments, “Most managers feel that as long as you get your work done, it’s up to you how to organize your time.” Managers apply that rule to their own schedules as well; according to one, “I am able to spend a great deal of time on the weekends with my family, and during the weekdays, I usually get home in time to see my children and read them stories before bedtime.” Another reports, “The firm does everything possible to exceed client expectations, but gives plenty of flexibility to balance work and life. Face time is not high on the firm’s priority list.” But when staffers do have to spend a weekend on the job, “usually people can work from home.”

Things could be worse

No one’s slacking on the job, though—average workweeks hover around 60 hours, not exactly a light load. But it’s all relative. As one recent hire tells us, “This has been 10 times better than the first company I worked at after I got my MBA. The hours are sometimes long, but by comparison, it is very manageable.” And while travel is a fact of life, the schedule is “no worse than other consulting firms.” In fact, some say travel is “a lot less than at other firms,” and one source notes, “I even lost my frequent-flier status.” Specific requirements may depend on position—we’re told “business analysts typically travel less than consultants and other, more senior, colleagues.”

It helps matters that ADL has a “no-camping-out-at-the-client’s-site culture.” A business analyst explains, “ADL uses a model where generally travel to the client site is done to kick off a project, for the final presentation and possibly some meetings in between, but most of the work is done in your home office. This model limits the amount of time spent camped out at the client site, and allows the consultants to spend more evenings at home with their families, rather than in a faraway hotel room. There are exceptions, of course, where the whole project is done on site with the client, but these are rare.” Another staffer agrees, “The traveling isn’t too excessive at ADL. In the private equity practice, our due diligence projects require, at the most, a short one-to two-day visit to the company. More typical portfolio company improvement projects may require more traveling, but generally not to the extent of the common 3-4-5 consulting travel rule.”

Supportive supervisors

It also helps make travel (and work, in general) more bearable that supervisors tend to be compassionate. A manager in Houston comments, “For the two major projects I’ve been on that required substantial travel (every week for several months), my director gave me every chance not to take the projects, and the decision was fully mine. He was very supportive and understanding of the fact that it would mean significant time away from my family.” Another staffer comments, “I am a new parent, and while there is nothing on paper, the firm has really accommodated my needs. I have not traveled for more than two days since my kid was born.” And a recent hire reports that, overall, “I have found the managers and directors at ADL to be friendly and open to guiding and mentoring junior consultants.” Another staffer adds, “They challenge me, but support me at the same time.”

Training in the sunshine

The ADL support system also includes plenty of training. We’re told there are “ample internal training options for new consultants,” and there’s a “well-defined mentoring program.” One insider explains, “We use both formal and informal training methods. New employees go through a formal standard consulting training geared to their career stage, and there is a variety of other formal training sessions as you progress through your career.” It’s an added bonus that formal training for new hires takes place in Europe, “usually somewhere nice and sunny like Nice or Barcelona.” A colleague adds, “Every few weeks, we have Friday lunch-and-learn sessions that provide junior team members the opportunity to present a topic or skill to the rest of the group. These sessions are great because they develop our core presentation skills while educating the group on current topics.”

Move up by merit

It's also nice to know that career advancement options are plentiful—a recent hire in New York comments, “ADL is growing impressively fast in the U.S. market. Therefore, there are huge opportunities for each individual consultant in the firm.” That's a good thing, since the environment is reportedly up or out, although there are “no strict time lines for advancement.” The firm is a “strict meritocracy” and there's a definite emphasis on “performance-based advancement,” providing “great opportunities for high performers and entrepreneurial spirits.” One consultant adds, “We get evaluated on a set of clear criteria twice annually and after each project. You are expected to identify your weaknesses and improve.” “If you are good,” assures another, “you are on the fast track.”

We're also told that there's plenty of “exposure to clients' senior executives,” and there are “excellent opportunities for client interaction early on in one's career.” A Texas-based staffer reports, “Clients are frequently top-management level, and consultants and analysts frequently interact with these kinds of people in the course of project work.”

BlackBerry not required

Staffer enthusiasm dips a bit when it comes to compensation, which most say is just about average for the industry. Although ADL offers a bonus “based on profit sharing” and “analysts can expect bonuses of up to 15 percent of base,” sources feel “bonuses could be more generous.” A senior manager says that as far as he's aware, there's “not much opportunity for tax-deferred savings,” though the firm notes that it does contribute to employees' 401(k) plans.

Perks can help make up for a less-than-perfect salary, however. One staffer comments, “We just received a new health plan that is very comprehensive, both medical and dental.” “Cell phone bills are reimbursed”—and even better, some say, “it doesn't have to be a BlackBerry.” Staffers can join the Hertz #1 Club, and are also offered health club reimbursement. Late nights are partly made up for by the policy whereby, “if you are working past 8 or 8:30 p.m., dinner and transportation home are covered.” And in another morale booster, there are various company events, including “dinner parties,” “employee-organized outing trips (such as skiing, etc.),” “a Christmas party” and “a lot of after-work social gatherings.” A manager in New York adds, “Whoever wins the best project of the semester, the team takes a trip together for a week—wherever they want to go.” There's also good reason to rave about ADL to friends—one source mentions a \$5,000 referral bonus.

And it's always easier spending time at work in a nice office. A business analyst reports, “ADL has put a lot of thought into making sure we have office spaces in nice locations that look very professional for clients. They are also very responsive to our working needs.” And there's little need to jump around, as staffers are assigned “a permanent desk.” “My desk is mine,” grins one source, “whether I am at a client site or not.” Another echoes that there is “plenty of space and everyone has his own place—something not common in consulting.”

Time to sign up with Berlitz

Although a manager in New York says “we are trying to increase the number of women in the office,” by and large, staffers view their colleagues as a diverse mix of people. A consultant in Houston observes, “Over half of the office is some other nationality or ethnicity,” and a colleague echoes, “As a global firm, we serve a wide variety of clients and cultures; correspondingly, our consulting staff comes from diverse array of cultural backgrounds.” A senior consultant in New York notes, “In our office of 24 people, we are fluent in 14 different languages.” Others add that “minorities are very well represented,” and there is “great team integration.” And regarding GLBT diversity, a recent hire states with conviction, “We firmly believe a person's sexual orientation (among other things that make individuals unique), is absolutely irrelevant to whether or not he or she gets hired.”

There are mixed opinions when it comes to philanthropy at ADL. One source reports, “ADL has a whole corporate citizenship program worldwide. This is sharpened and improved continuously.” Consultants in New York say, “We did a pro bono assignment just last week”; an insider in that location reports, “One effort we have going on right now is joining a nonprofit group that does free-of-charge consulting work to improve the education of children.” But in other offices, some claim there's a “very limited presence in terms of community involvement.” A manager reassuringly chimes in, “We are starting to develop plans to be more involved in community development.”

Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.

Suite 3000, John Hancock Center
 875 North Michigan Avenue
 Chicago, IL 60611
 Phone: (312) 255-5000
 Fax: (312) 255-6000
www.diamondconsultants.com

LOCATIONS

Chicago, IL (HQ)
 Hartford, CT
 New York, NY
 Washington, DC
 London
 Mumbai

PRACTICE AREAS

Complex Program Management • Customer Value Management • Data Strategy • Digital IQ Diagnostic • Enterprise Resource Planning • Global Sourcing Advisory • Growth Strategies • Information & Analytics • IT Cost Management • IT Governance • Marketing Strategy • Multichannel Integration • Operations Improvement • Private Equity • Risk Management • Strategic Enterprise Architecture • Supply Chain Management • Technology Strategy & Transformation

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: DTPI (Nasdaq)
President & CEO: Adam J. Gutstein
2008 Employees: 626
2007 Employees: 613
2008 Net Revenue: \$182.3 million
2007 Net Revenue: \$168.7 million



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Live anywhere"
- "Unclear direction for the future"
- "Family-friendly"
- "Too IT-focused"

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #9 – Offices
- #14 – Compensation
- #14 – Formal Training
- #19 – Work/Life Balance

Diversity

- #9 – Diversity for GLBT
- #13 – Diversity for Minorities
- #16 – Best Firms for Diversity

UPPERS

- "Get to work in relatively newer sectors like telecom, media, etc."
- Competitive salary and benefits package
- "Small size gives more junior resources the opportunity to fill stretch roles"
- "Ease of getting to know senior people"

DOWNERS

- "Not much brand value outside of the Midwest"
- "For junior levels, you don't really have much of a say in where you get staffed"
- "More and more execution-type projects are filling the pipeline"
- Up-or-out promotion policy

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Office-by-office recruiting contacts available at
www.diamondconsultants.com/PublicSite/people/careers

THE SCOOP

Diamond under the loupe

Diamond Management & Technology Consultants hides nothing with its name, being a management and IT consulting firm with four locations in the U.S., and one each in the U.K. and India. The company targets businesses that are strategically dependent upon technology, serving clients through practices focused on the financial services, insurance, health care, consumer packaged goods, retail, manufacturing, logistics, travel and transportation, and telecommunications industries, as well as the public sector. Diamond also has an enterprise practice, with cross-industry offerings for clients involved in manufacturing, retail, distribution, travel and transportation, and consumer packaged goods. Diamond's net revenue reached \$182.3 million in fiscal 2008, an 8 percent improvement on 2007's \$168.7 million.

Diamonds are forever ... clusters, not so much

The firm was founded in January 1994 as Diamond Technology Partners by Mel Bergstein, who served as CEO until April 2006, when he became chairman of the board. Bergstein put Diamond together with capital fronted by investment firm Safeguard Scientifics, eventually taking the firm public in early 1997. In November 2000, the company merged with Cluster Consulting, a Spanish consultancy with broad access to Europe, and became DiamondCluster, a global entity with an international client roster. The dramatic expansion proved premature, however, as prolonged shakiness in the tech market forced the company to cut spending and downsize staff in 2002 and 2003.

Diamond turned a corner of sorts in 2004, posting revenue growth on the year, but management called for a change. The firm embarked on a restructuring plan in September 2005, which resulted in the closing of offices in Düsseldorf and Lisbon, plus a reduction in staff in the Barcelona office. Jobs across the organization were cut by 6 percent. Despite these shifts, revenue seemed to be tamped down, rising in 2005, but falling below 2004 levels in 2006. Growth in North America was sluggish and the firm had difficulty disposing of its unused assets in Europe. In July 2006, Mercer Management Consulting (now Oliver Wyman) agreed to purchase the firm's operations in Spain, France, Germany, Brazil and the United Arab Emirates for \$30 million. In August 2006, Cluster was cut from the name, with the newly sculpted firm renamed Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.

Facets and settings

The company's financial services practice is its biggest moneymaker, accounting for 30 percent of fee revenue in fiscal 2008. Clients in this practice area include four of the top-five investment banks and three of the top-four credit card brands, plus other capital markets firms, retail brokerages, asset managers, credit card issuers and processors, payment system operators and full-service retail and commercial banks. Goldman Sachs and American Express have both used Diamond's financial services practice, which addresses issues such as adjustment to and assessment of new technology, information management strategies, productivity through strategic sourcing, compliance and risk management.

The insurance practice, which brought in 23 percent of fee revenue in fiscal 2008, serves life, property and casualty, reinsurance and brokerage firms. Among its services are customer experience improvement, analysis of market data, improved speed to market and product profitability, IT innovation and improved distribution service platforms. With the sector trending toward convergence of insurance, financial services and health care, Diamond advises insurance clients on their strategic positioning. It also addresses the opportunities created by a growing retirement population.

Accounting for 21 percent of fiscal 2008 fee revenue, Diamond's health care practice works with pharmaceutical, biotech, device, health insurance, provider and disease management companies on such business and technology issues as consumer-directed health care strategy and execution, IT optimization and value extraction, integrated business and technology architecture, process and planning, and large transformational program management. Marquee clients in this segment include Pfizer, Bayer and Aetna Life Insurance.

The enterprise practice (17 percent of fee revenue in fiscal 2008) offers sales and operations planning, pricing, transformational technology platforms and data analytics to corporations in the manufacturing, retail, distribution, travel and transportation, and consumer packaged goods industries. Kraft, Pepsi and Lowe's have been counted among Diamond's clients in this area. The remaining 10 percent of fee revenue came from the telecom and public-sector practices. The telecom segment advises operators, vendors and content providers in the equipment, wireless, cable and fixed-line markets, with some additional activity in media and entertainment. Services range across business and marketing strategy, customer behavior insight, profit improvement, wireless and broadband strategy and execution, and IT assessment and strategy issues. In the public sector, Diamond works with U.S. local, state and federal government agencies to improve operational efficiency, boost responsiveness and tighten up security.

Getting everyone where they need to go

In a recent public-sector project for the Chicago Transit Authority, the firm managed the launch of the organization's next-generation smart card offerings. These contactless (as opposed to magnetic stripe) value-holding cards are used to pay fares on public transit quickly and easily. Diamond analyzed both the benefits to customers and the economic advantage granted to the CTA by using the new cards. Having verified a positive advantage, the firm designed a transition plan and helped assemble a team of CTA staff to carry it out. Diamond guided the team as it worked in multiple areas, including marketing, technology, operations and finance, to create the necessary infrastructure to support the new fare system. The system was launched successfully, and sales in the first year following the overhaul exceed expectations.

Precious opportunities

To promote innovation in the use of technology in commerce, the firm hosts the DiamondExchange program, a series of events that brings together senior executives, from both current and prospective client corporations, to discuss business issues. The subjects of each event, held three times a year at five-star resorts, are presented within the framework of Diamond's capabilities; trends and risks are illustrated and reviewed through the firm's recent client work and research studies. Two themes discussed in 2007 were "The Battle for the Customer" and "Competing in the Networked Economy." Since its inaugural run in 1997, the DiamondExchange has featured some highly notable contributors, such as former Secretary of State Colin Powell, Jack Greenberg, retired CEO and chairman of McDonald's, and Admiral Thad William Allen, commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard.

DiamondExchange is supported by the Diamond Network, a brain trust of experts and executives that serves to keep the company up to date on changes in the marketplace and to enhance its service to, as well as access to, clients. Members of the network are either Diamond Fellows or client relationship executives (CREs). Fellows are under paid contract with the firm, and contribute to its work in several possible ways—by serving as faculty at DiamondExchange events, publishing white papers or even participating in client engagements. CREs, who tend to be retired executives or independent consultants, work less directly with the firm. Typically paid through commission, CREs make use of their contacts within Diamond's targeted industries to facilitate the creation of new client relationships for the firm.

Glinting from the book shelf

Besides the publications of its fellows, Diamond consultants produce a number of written works, including articles, white papers and books. For starters, a 1998 chart-topper, *Unleashing the Killer App*, was co-written by Larry Downes and former Diamond Partner (now head of the Diamond Fellows network) Chunka Mui. The book, an examination of the growing necessity for digital strategies, was named by *The Wall Street Journal* in October 2005 as one of the five best books on business and the Internet. More recently, several staff members collaborated on "Investing in Risk: The Enduring Legacy of the Subprime Meltdown," a February 2008 report on the importance of risk management, even in the face of apparent major opportunities. Mui and former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Paul Carroll published *Billion Dollar Lessons* in September 2008, and Diamond Fellow and MIT professor Dan Ariely published the 2008 *New York Times* business best seller, *Predictably Irrational*.

The firm also conducts multiple research studies to ensure the solidity of its own and its clients' knowledge base. It releases the Global IT Outsourcing Study annually, a breakdown of perspectives on the business climate from buyers and providers of

outsourcing. Another survey is the Digital IQ Study, which provides a glimpse into executive views on technology and its uses in their specific enterprise. In March 2008, Diamond came out with a retirement study, which analyzed the views of consumers aged 45 and older on their health and finances. The study found that 21 percent of respondents had disability insurance, and 46 percent felt they could not afford a medical emergency—vital information to the insurance providers served by the company.

GETTING HIRED

Fair but selective

Insiders say the hiring process at Diamond is “very well managed,” “very fair” and “pretty laid-back,” but still “very selective.” In fact, insists a principal, the firm has the “most complete hiring process I have ever witnessed in 18-plus years of experience.” By and large, qualified candidates go through three rounds of interviews, including “one standard HR screen,” a “phone screen with a consultant” and a final set of interviews at the Diamond offices. The final round generally involves “one case interview in which you are given a case the day before and have to present,” along with “one on-the-spot case interview” and “one behavioral interview.” A vice chairman mentions that there may be “special tests for technical people.”

Stating your case

An associate explains that for the formal, situational case interview, “a sample organizational problem is provided, and you are questioned on how you would go about resolving that issue (this may include reorganization, analyzing internal problems, finances, IT-related questions, operations-related questions, etc.).” For the on-the-spot case interview, candidates are given “one hour to prepare a presentation that will later be given to a Diamond partner.” One newbie opines that this “develop-a-deck case” approach is “more realistic and more indicative of how people can properly structure thoughts and arguments than traditional situational/conversational” case questions. A recent hire recalls that he was “asked to draw slides and present” on the following question: “How would you conduct an IT spend analysis for ACME Insurance company?” Others share additional case examples: “Estimate the space required for an entrepreneur to start a new restaurant in a particular area. If the demand exceeds his estimation, what kind of alternate measures can he take to service a larger number of customers?” and “The mayor of New York City wants to investigate the feasibility of a municipal broadband system. Walk me through how you would help the mayor decide if this is a good decision.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Smart and nice? What a catch!

There’s a term Diamond consultants have coined to describe their firm’s culture: SWAN—an acronym for staffers who are “smart, work hard, analytical and nice.” Respondents agree that the firm has a “very strong” culture, and is full of “incredibly smart people” who are “down-to-earth, interesting and fun to be around.” An associate in Chicago remarks, “The people I work with on my projects are the types of people I’d typically hang out with outside of work.” We’re also told the atmosphere is “familial,” “team-oriented” and “collegial,” as well as “entrepreneurial and innovative.” As one principal puts it, Diamond is “dedicated to delivering high-quality work to clients while providing the opportunity for personal development of all consultants.”

All hands on deck

In addition, due to a “very open” and “very flat” structure, we’re told that “everyone knows everyone,” and “everyone wants to help everyone.” A manager in New York reports that “all levels interact very easily with each other. Partners are extremely approachable.” Similarly, colleagues concur that “regardless of the levels involved, everyone is encouraged to add input.” A

senior source explains that Diamond “encourages thinking outside the box, outspokenness, and diversity of people and ideas.” Additionally, the firm’s small size “contributes to an environment where one feels comfortable asking questions.” In keeping with that inclusive mentality, an analyst notes that, three times a year, “All-Hands meetings bring everyone together in Chicago for company updates from our CEO, training and social events to reconnect with colleagues from past client teams.” And he does mean everyone: A co-worker reports that “all employees are flown to Chicago” for the meetings, “including our staff from the U.K. and India offices.” Plus, we’re told that “partners pay for the booze party” afterward.

Have coffee with a higher-up

On the downside of being a “young, small firm,” a partner explains, “We still do not benefit from the brand like some other firms do, meaning we have to work that much harder to prove ourselves to get consideration when we are not known.” But most say the positives of Diamond’s small size outweigh the negatives. A source in New York emphasizes that the firm is “too small not to offer great opportunities to interact with senior partners and senior clients.” “Something about our culture and our size encourages our senior leaders to be collaborative,” agrees a colleague in Chicago. It also helps that “Diamond’s ratio of associates to partners is one of the smallest in the industry.” A senior consultant shares, “I’ve always had access to the partner, and the partner has always been aware of the tasks I am working on.” Furthermore, he continues, “from day one, I have been charged with developing client relationships and interacting with the client without supervision.” An associate adds, “Because Diamond works in very small teams, opportunities to interact with all levels of clients are usually available. Even though I’m a junior associate, I’ve given presentations to the CIO of our current client and worked intimately with very senior-level staff.” Another junior staffer states, “My friends at other management/technology consulting firms indicate that they hardly, if ever, get to see the partners,” adding, “The fact that at Diamond I could walk by the CEO’s office or grab a cup of coffee with a senior partner is a contrasting difference.”

No hanging around

In addition, notes a principal, supervisors give “excellent feedback beyond formal reviews,” adding that, overall, “the company has a vested interest in everyone improving.” Indeed, development is critical at Diamond, since the firm’s up-or-out promotion policy means “consultants are expected to improve over time and those who do not improve are asked to leave.” An associate explains that “consultants typically advance a level every two years, and can become partner from a senior associate level in approximately seven years.” Others note, though, that “those who perform way above expectations can move faster.”

Some respondents say the up-or-out attitude is “loose, with some leniency,” and explain that “employees get an opportunity to work on their weaknesses”—“there is a high degree of support in an effort to ensure one’s success.” But others insist that the policy is “enforced strongly, and is designed to promote a significant portion of the firm each year,” with “an effort to force out the bottom 5 to 10 percent of the firm.” Viewed in a positive light, the “aggressive advancement track creates a challenging environment with a lot of responsibility in a very short period of time,” a principal explains. “It also means that consultants who are not necessarily a good fit with the firm do not hang around long,” an associate points out.

“Work smart, not hard”

The emphasis on performance means that the Diamond culture can be “intense,” but a new hire in Chicago adds that there’s “enough perspective to know that there’s more to life than work.” The idea, says another junior staffer, is to “work smart, not hard.” Of course, “the workload does have its highs and lows,” but most staffers agree that Diamond “goes out of its way to accommodate employee needs,” and that “employees are able to lead balanced lives.” Generally, insiders report putting in “55 to 60 hours a week,” although “work hours vary greatly from client to client and project to project.”

It certainly helps balance the load that “weekends are sacred, even during the most grueling of projects.” According to a manager, “Partners and projects are flexible and will work around personal obligations to make sure you don’t miss anything important at home.” Plus, an associate reveals, “Each project I’ve been on has been sold with plenty of time to complete the deliverables without having to pull consistent 70-hour workweeks. When I’m on the road, this has provided plenty of outside work

opportunity to see the city, have team dinners, work out, etc.” Along those lines, a source points out that project teams often “have designated social coordinators to make sure people can balance work and life.” In addition, respondents say there’s a “significant vacation allowance,” and they have “no problem taking those days.”

Choose your location

Consultants also appreciate that they “can live in any city that they want” (although a senior associate warns that, “starting in 2008,” new hires are “restricted to the Eastern, Central and Mountain time zones for two years”). The flexibility in location stems largely from the facts that “the work culture and style of business does necessitate travel,” and that “three nights away from home” per week is the norm. To help ease the burden of travel, Diamond “promotes a 4+1 policy, with four days at a client site and one day in the home office” (or just at home). “We have a live-anywhere policy that allows even local people to work from home on Fridays,” explains an associate in Chicago.

Additionally, an associate reports that “Diamond does its very best to ensure that you are comfortable, and that your needs are met while traveling.” For example, road warriors “get up to a \$400 airline club membership,” and Fridays “are usually relaxing days for conference calls, administrative tasks and dedicated time without meeting to work on deliverables.” Or, an analyst explains, staffers can opt for “alternative travel” on Thursday evening through the weekend “to destinations of their choice, as long as the air ticket is not excessive.” Looking at the benefits of travel, sources say being on the road “allows you to better bond with the team.” A contact states, “Though it depends on the culture within each project team, often co-workers will get together in a strange city for dinner and/or entertainment after work, just to unwind, be social and get to know each other outside of the office.” A manager adds, “My best friends are here, and that makes it easy to go on the road every week.”

Although it’s rare, it’s also not unheard of for staffers to stay in one place. One recent hire in Chicago who has yet to travel explains, “People living in one of the cities with most clients can usually get staffed with a client locally, thus minimizing their travel requirements. However, that is not a given.”

Get your stake, for better or worse

What is a given is that staffers “feel well compensated” for their time. We’re told that salaries are “right in the midst of” industry standards, and one recent hire notes that it’s even “possible to get a 20 percent raise within the first six months of work.” Diamond also offers a 50 percent match on 401(k) contributions “up to 3 percent,” as well as an “employee stock purchase plan and yearly restricted stock grants.” As a longtimer indicates, “Everyone who joins Diamond receives equity, which is fully vested after a period of four years with the firm,” adding, “During the annual review process, you’re eligible for additional equity bonuses.” That being said, a principal warns that “the stock has not yielded economic gains for most people over the last five years.”

Big on benefits

Perhaps Diamond’s biggest financial selling point, insiders say, is its “fully subsidized” health care plan, with a “zero co-pay for all doctors, dentists and prescriptions and no deductible,” plus a flat amount put “toward any and all vision care.” “They treat us right when we are sick,” says one analyst, and health care benefits extend to “spouses as well as domestic partners.” Diamond also offers “two weeks’ paternity leave” and “very generous adoption leave,” as well as “flexible work arrangements for new parents when returning from leave,” including “part-time, no-travel [schedules] and unpaid leave.”

In a lighthearted twist, at one of the All-Hands meetings each year, the firm hosts a “‘bizarre bazaar’ for all of our employees.” A senior source in Chicago explains, “The bazaar is basically like a fun/interactive science fair where each client project team creates a booth outlining the work we’re doing for the client. It ends up being a fun and informative event. Last year, one booth had sumo wrestling, and another had a live monkey. The connection back to the client project was a bit stretched, but it was a fun way to learn about what’s going on at the company.”

Enjoy the office views during training

Respondents say Diamond has “fabulous offices with amazing views,” but given the emphasis on travel and “virtual/home offices,” staffers “usually only see them during training.” And while we’re on the subject, insiders tell us “Diamond has excellent training programs,” including an “intense new-hire orientation/training.” An associate adds that the firm holds “special training sessions where candidates are flown in for sessions that could be anywhere from one week to three or four weeks long.” There are “learning labs conducted by Diamond on topics of interest.” A partner reports that employees have “an average of two weeks of classroom training per year,” and a colleague adds that, “as a consultant, you can be as proactive as you like about pursuing these opportunities.” There’s also “unofficial mentoring and training,” which most feel is an effective way of learning the ropes.

“An interesting mix”

When it comes to firm demographics, consultants say Diamond “is committed to maintaining a diversified staff,” noting that the firm is “very inclusive.” A source feels “Diamond has come a long way with diversity initiatives,” and others add that the firm “explicitly recruits women, both on campus and through experienced channels,” and also recruits at the “National Black MBA conference” and at the “national Reaching Out conference.” As far as minority support, there is “an affinity group called GL@D, which stands for Gays & Lesbians at Diamond,” and a “women’s forum, which hosts conferences and networking events,” such as a “March ‘women’s day’ at each of the offices.”

An associate states, “At my first All-Hands, I was amazed at how many people of different national origins, races and backgrounds I met at the firm.” She adds, “At Diamond, it doesn’t matter what color, religion, race or national origin you are—what matters is the value you bring to the team and your clients, how you treat your colleagues and essentially how smart you are.” Another comments, “Being a woman, I have found Diamond to be a very comfortable and welcoming place.” Similarly, a colleague echoes, “As a minority myself, I must say that Diamond makes no distinction between minorities and others,” adding, “There is a good amount of minorities from around the world here at Diamond, which makes for an interesting mix.”

Of course, there’s always room for improvement, and some note that the firm “could do better in having a higher number of minorities, particularly in senior leadership positions,” as well as “a larger number of women in senior leadership positions.” Still, respondents suggest that lagging numbers among higher-ups are likely reflective of “the consulting industry as a whole.”

Getting involved

Diamond staffers of all creeds come together to “participate in various firmwide philanthropic events,” including Hustle Up the Hancock in support of the American Cancer Society, Habitat for Humanity, cell phone drives and an inner-city high school intern program.” Staffers are also given one “paid day off to volunteer” annually, and the firm sponsors a “financial donation match up to \$500.” An associate adds that Diamond “sets aside a pile of money to fund community activities, which is accessible to each employee upon request.” As a final push, at each of the three yearly All-Hands meetings, the firm “has some type of charity drive.”

1050 Winter Street
Suite 3000
Waltham, MA 02451
Phone: (781) 434-1200
Fax: (781) 647-2804

444 Castro Street
Suite 600
Mountain View, CA 94041
Phone: (650) 967-2900
Fax: (650) 967-6367
www.prtm.com

LOCATIONS

Chicago, IL • Dallas, TX • Detroit, MI • Mountain View, CA
• New York, NY • Orange County, CA • Waltham, MA •
Washington, DC • Bangalore • Frankfurt • Glasgow • Lima •
London • Munich • Paris • Shanghai • Tokyo

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Technology Innovation
Customer Experience Innovation
Operational Strategy
Product Innovation
Supply Chain Innovation

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Global Managing Director: Scott Hefter
Americas Managing Director: Michael Aghajanian
Europe Managing Director: Dean Gilmore
Asia Managing Director: James So
2008 Employees: 675
2007 Employees: 660



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Polished engineers, niche consultants"
- "Brown-shoe ops guys"
- "Take care of their people"
- "Negatively competitive culture"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Areas

#9 – Operational Consulting

Quality of Life

#7 – Relationships with Supervisors

#9 – Interaction with Clients

#10 – Offices

#12 – Overall Satisfaction

#12 – Work/Life Balance

#14 – Firm Culture

#16 – Best Firms to Work For

#16 – Hours in the Office

Diversity

#2 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- "Balance of exciting career challenges with family"
- "Face time with the client from day one"
- "Abundance of international opportunities"

DOWNERS

- "Brand hasn't gotten recognition yet"
- "Compensation is not on par with other consulting firms"
- "Little formal training for new hires"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Use the online application form at www.prtm.com,
or e-mail careers@prtm.com

THE SCOOP

A keen eye

When PRTM lists its core practice areas, No. 1 on the list is operational strategy. The firm looks at companies and sees areas where operational strategy can be implemented—in the form of products, supply chains, customer experience and business technology. More specifically, PRTM focuses on increasing operational strategy by accelerating operational clockspeed, developing breakthrough products, driving asset utilization and top-line growth, expanding global presence, improving cost structure, managing organizational change, maximizing acquisitions and alliances, navigating regulatory change and strengthening customer loyalty. The industries the firm works with are manifold, including aerospace and defense, automotive, chemicals and process industries, communications and media, consumer goods, electronics and computing, energy, financial services, health care, industrial, life sciences, private equity, public sector and software.

When the bubble bursts, learn to swim

The firm didn't always have such a variety of clients, though. As late as 2005, *Consulting* magazine confidently stated, "PRTM focuses on operations and process-related work predominantly for technology companies." The firm's 1976 founding took place in one of the hearts of Silicon Valley: Palo Alto, Calif. As such, its client list over the years prominently featured major high-tech companies like Cisco, Texas Instruments and Sun Microsystems.

However, in a November 2007 interview with *Consulting* magazine, PRTM Global Managing Director Scott Hefter discussed the end of the recent high-tech boom: "Being a technology consulting firm, that had an effect on us. I think that when history gets fully rewritten, that will have proven to have been a very important and very good time for us, because it forced us to get into a more diversified set of industries." In particular, Hefter mentioned the firm's expansion into the public sector, life sciences, consumer products and global health sectors.

Happiness is a warm consulting firm

Every year since 2002, *Consulting* magazine has published its the Best Firms to Work For ranking, and every year, PRTM has been in the top 10. The 2007 survey compiled responses from 9,000 professionals, working for 190 firms, on issues such as morale, serving client needs and travel time. And even though the 2007 survey was far broader and more detailed than previous surveys, PRTM still came in at No. 5.

Who's your data?

To better acquire the data necessary for developing operational strategy, the firm established a separate enterprise to capture operational performance and best practice information: the Performance Measurement Group, LLC. Since 1998, PMG has served over 1,000 companies with its operational benchmarking offerings. PMG's current president and general manager is Ed Salley, who first became familiar with PRTM as a client, having worked, over a 15 year period, for AT&T Technologies, Inc., AT&T Wireless and NorthStar Communications Group.

SCORing the supply chain

PRTM helped develop the Supply Chain Operations Reference (SCOR[®]) standard, which PMG uses for its supply chain benchmarking services. PRTM also took part in the founding of the Supply-Chain Council, an 850-member nonprofit consortium that maintains and promotes the SCOR open industry standard as a basis for achieving operational excellence. PMG provides SCOR-based benchmarking services that comprehensively compare a company's supply chain performance, practices and operations complexity to other companies in their industry, thereby allowing performance objectives to be fully aligned with operational strategy. Based on its research, PMG reports that best-in-class firms, when compared to median performers, have

“25 to 30 percent lower total supply chain costs, 55 to 70 percent lower inventories, 25 to 50 percent higher forecast accuracy, and a 30 to 50 percent lower order-fulfillment lead time.”

In recognition of its expertise in supply chains, PRTM has helped judge the European Supply Chain Excellence Awards since 2006. In March 2008, Shoshanah Cohen, director of PRTM's supply chain innovation practice, told the publication *Supply & Demand Chain Executive* that supply chains in the 21st century would be more global, with customers expecting better results, and environmental issues coming to the forefront. Cohen said she was focused on fulfilling these requirements, while still producing top-quality safety, quality, service and profit margins.

Setting the PACE

Another major PMG tool is PACE[®] (Product and Cycle-time Excellence). The framework attempts to create profitable growth by “introducing the right products at the right pace.” PACE relies on a dense mix of data concerning schedule variance, time-to-market, pipeline throughput and R&D effectiveness. *BusinessWeek* has called PACE “one of the most successful and effective models of the product development process for technology-based industries.”

Working for Uncle Sam

PRTM has a long history of collaboration with the U.S. government, and December 2007 offered a flurry of assignments. That month, the firm began assisting the government's Department of Health and Human Services in creating the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, which will stand as the main agency in charge of protecting Americans from biothreats. PRTM will help close the gaps that often result from operational problems, such as unclear chains of command and lack of certainty in funding sources.

Also that month, the firm proudly announced that the White House appointed Dr. Robert Kadlec, director in the biodefense and public health practice, to be the special assistant to the president for homeland security and senior director for biological defense policy. PRTM expects to continue working with Kadlec on issues of biodefense and public health preparedness.

In yet another government-related contract awarded in December 2007, the firm announced that it was teaming up with Palladium Group, Inc., a leading strategy management firm, to provide medical materiel life cycle management and logistics solutions to the Army. This blanket purchase agreement with the U.S. Army Medical Materiel Agency will extend over several years.

East meets West

PRTM embarked upon a major expansion into Asia in 2007. The month of May brought the opening of an office in Bangalore, and July saw an office built in Shanghai. These facilities were not only opened to serve the growing Indian and Chinese concerns of the firm's clients, but also to help cultivate local companies emerging in those markets. Said Steve Hussey, managing director of the new Bangalore office, “While India may be a major hub for R&D activity, it has yet to become a regional center for manufacturing. Companies in India face many challenges in developing supply chain excellence. We can help companies streamline their operations and prepare to become global suppliers.”

GETTING HIRED

Caseless interviews

PRTM's hiring process “follows the typical cycle,” with most candidates going through “three rounds” of interviews. However, “PRTM does not use cases.” There is “an initial informal interview, followed by a first-round interview with a director or principal, followed by a final-decision round of interviews, typically with three to four directors.” This final round normally lasts “about three to four hours.” There is “no formal testing,” because the “focus is on cultural fit, rather than technical aptitude.”

Interviewers are looking to assess “initiative, core skills and expertise.” They want to see “all-around business ability, as well as the ability to work well with small teams.” Interviews are “very much a two-way process,” as candidates are “encouraged to ask questions and explore whether PRTM is right for you.”

One consultant says of the firm’s approach, “The use of cases isn’t common since they don’t prove to be a reliable indicator of people who need to be strategic change agents. Candidates can learn case methods that don’t reflect their true potential.” A colleague notes, “There may be a question like, ‘In situation X, please tell me what you would recommend to the client and why.’” But overall, interviews at PRTM are “personality- and behavior-based.” Interviewers “don’t care how good you are—if you’re not a nice person to work with, they will not hire you.” One source recalls of the interview experience, “Everyone just wanted to get to know me and why I wanted to work for PRTM.” Candidates must demonstrate that “the firm can feel comfortable putting you in front of a client.”

The firm is “very selective,” according to a contact, who explains, “We want to ensure that the people we hire are capable of becoming a director in the firm someday.” For that reason, PRTM recruits from “top-tier MBA schools and undergraduate programs, as well as from industry and other consulting firms.” The firm focuses on “20 to 30 MBA programs worldwide” and “20 or so top universities for undergraduates,” including Duke, Columbia, Stanford, Harvard, MIT, UPenn and Northwestern, among others.

No contest

Candidates discover during the interview process that “PRTM’s people are absolutely stellar.” They are “honest and unpretentious,” and foster a “less cutthroat environment.” Its culture “rewards innovative thought,” and “promotions are completely merit-based.” These things, combined with “unparalleled project opportunities and opportunities for personal development,” cause candidates to turn down offers from many competing firms. In fact, after interviewing at PRTM, many “do not even consider other management consulting firms.” Once onboard, consultants rarely regret their decision. A source says, “For an industry where a lot of people change firms a few times, I’ve only heard of two people who’ve left PRTM to work at another firm. Departing PRTM-ers tend to leave consulting, not just the firm.”

On the frontlines

PRTM’s “excellent” internships provide “a good feel for what the job would entail upon entering as an associate.” Interns are “expected to contribute from day one,” and are “encouraged to participate in every aspect of the firm.” They are “out in front, interfacing with the client, rather than behind the scenes doing analytical work.” One former intern says, “Based on my conversations with my business school classmates, I strongly believe my summer internship provided me the most enriching and valuable work experience of all the other consulting interns.” Mentoring is “readily available,” and the firm’s staff is “welcoming and accommodating” to new summer faces. Interns are given “enormous responsibility,” which allows them to “really understand consulting.” A source recalls, “I was immediately staffed on a project aimed at transforming a company’s product development and innovation capabilities, and played a real role in working with clients on a key piece of the project.” Most interns finish the summer “convinced that PRTM is a great place to work.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

A bunch of happy campers

PRTM consultants consider their firm to be the “best kept secret in consulting.” The culture is “not a slogan, but a way of life,” emphasizing “core values of integrity, honesty, humility, quality of work and work/life balance.” The firm has “been around for over 30 years, but is still as nimble as the day we started.” With “very happy clients” and “growing revenue and staff,” PRTM is “a special place right now.” It offers a “fantastic balance of intelligent, success-minded individuals who are also extremely pragmatic and down-to-earth.” There “aren’t a lot of big egos,” but rather, “great interaction at all levels.” In this “highly

collaborative and friendly culture, everyone pitches in for firm success.” One consultant says, “PRTM’s culture is reflective of the firm’s roots in serving extremely innovative, fast-moving companies. The culture is extremely apolitical, values initiative and is extremely collegial. Many PRTMers are friends outside of work, and spouses and family are not only valued, but are included in many firm activities.”

The firm “promotes an entrepreneurial culture at all levels.” According to one insider, “Consultants at all levels, from first-year consultants to senior directors, are encouraged to participate in the continual evolution of the firm, from new business opportunities to community involvement efforts.” Some efforts are “unstructured and hence less effective,” but “there are no walls or closed doors.” At PRTM, “a healthy, ‘get involved’ attitude is always present.” This “meritocracy” is “built on a foundation of a flat organization, apprenticeship-based development, strong work ethic and very high-quality standards.” People are “very pleasant to work with,” and the “talent of consultants is impressive.” Some complain, though, that PRTM’s “do-it-yourself culture” results in “consistent, significant underinvestment in the company’s infrastructure.” One source interprets this another way: “The firm is careful with how it spends money, and manages its business development efforts without much of the razzle-dazzle of other firms.” The majority of employees have nothing but good things to say about the culture, and most agree that “PRTM is simply a great place to work.”

Monday through Thursday on site

Travel at PRTM “can be taxing, even though the firm manages it well.” The norm at this “hands-on firm” is to be away from home Monday through Thursday, and sometimes “Fridays too, on an as-needed basis,” although there are some consultants based in “offices with many local clients, such as Mountain View, Calif.,” who “go multiple years without traveling.” A contact says, “PRTM emphasizes being on site with our clients in order to really get in and drive change, so we do have a significant amount of travel required. But the firm emphasizes staffing consultants on projects that are local to their home office whenever possible.” And, “travel is made easier through in-house travel agents attuned to the needs of management consultants.” We’re told that travel requirements “vary by project and are highly dependent on where you choose to live.” According to one insider, who attests to the firm’s efforts to accommodate staffers, “We try to let our staff self select their office location. Accommodations are always made for personal emergencies, and we work with our staff to accommodate special needs. Most often, we can find win-win solutions for high-performing staff.”

Consultants “occasionally travel to undesirable locations without direct flights,” but many enjoy travel because they are among friends. One source recalls, “When we were on assignment in Omaha, my team made every effort to enjoy the local offerings, including the haunted houses and the nightlife. For New Yorkers in Omaha, it was a stretch, but we laughed a lot and made the most of the travel.” Many staffers “build meaningful relationships with colleagues through traveling with them.”

Balance is in your hands

Being at the client site Monday through Thursday “can make building a connection with the hometown difficult,” but PRTM “generally has a pretty good balance.” The firm “puts a real emphasis on making sure people have interests and pursuits outside of work, and works with you to help you maintain them.” Insiders say “client projects and internal responsibilities are managed as a whole to ensure that individuals are not overcommitted.” And according to one source, “Staffing takes into account both recent project intensity as well as individual situations, so as to share the burden across everyone equally.” PRTM “strives to keep projects aggressive yet manageable to avoid the burnout syndrome experienced at many other consulting firms.” The workweek is “always aggressive, with long days that are pretty standard,” but weekends “generally are sacred.” One consultant claims, “I have been able to successfully balance work and life, which is reflected in my ability to raise four children all under the age of eight years old. The firm allows flexibility, and I am able to make all the important school events and even serve as my daughter’s soccer coach.”

PRTM puts a lot of responsibility in the hands of its consultants, and trusts them to make appropriate judgments about achieving work/life balance. The firm is “more concerned about customer satisfaction than about schedules,” so consultants have the freedom to get their work done in whatever manner suits them. A contact explains, “Consulting is not a 9-to-5 job, so you need to take personal time when necessary. Sometimes the right thing to do is take a few hours during the day for personal needs, and

sometimes the right thing to do is work the weekend to meet a Monday deadline.” As a general rule, “there is virtually no face time requirement, and consultants manage their own schedule to a great degree.”

Specific hourly requirements “depend on the project and the project manager,” but the majority of consultants log somewhere between 50 and 60 hours per week. An insider breaks it down: “Most client projects are structured to require 40 to 45 hours per week, and other firm management responsibilities require anywhere from two to 10 hours a week.” Weeks that require “in excess of 60 to 65 hours are typically rare,” and most respondents consider their workload “quite reasonable when compared to other management consulting firms.” Assignments “vary in length,” with most running between three and six months—some are as short as two to three weeks, and some as long as one year. Several sources point out that “projects tend to be longer than average for management consulting.”

Bonuses aren't cutting it

PRTM's compensation program “includes bonuses, annual salary adjustments, profit sharing and promotions.” Insiders are hesitant to disclose details, as a matter of company policy, but note that “bonuses do not reflect the industry average.” While “base salary tends to be near the ballpark with other top consulting firms,” bonuses are “uncompetitive” and “far below average.” Overall, many feel that “pay is lagging,” and add that “infrastructural investments, such as research, knowledge management, IT and training, are significantly lagging.” A contact says, “Compensation, especially bonuses, should be more aligned with other top consulting firms.” A director rebuts, “Bonuses are based on a combination of firm and individual performance. In addition to bonuses, health care, savings and other benefits are all top notch,” and PRTM “does provide some profit-sharing contribution to consultants' 401(k) plans.” But some feel this is a poor excuse for a match. One consultant remarks, “Although we do have a 401(k) plan, the firm does not match employee contributions. Instead, it will add a profit-sharing percentage based on base salary to your 401(k).”

But there are some other perks. Each holiday season, “every consultant gets a case of really, really good wine,” and there are “company parties as staff meetings two to three times a year.” A contact notes, “PRTM has many events that include spouses and/or families, such as company retreats, outings and parties,” including “incredible black-tie Christmas parties.” The firm offers “nothing formal or specified” for new parents, but insiders say it is “extremely sensitive to the needs of new parents and looks to do whatever is needed to help them out.” One source points out, “When my first child was born a few years ago, I was able to take advantage of California's paternity leave program and spend a month at home without impacting my career at all.” The firm offers “no paternity leave,” but “the insurance is phenomenal when extended to new members of your family.” Consultants also get “good medical benefits” and “an automatic \$100 credit toward cell phone usage each year”—on top of “a liberal expense policy for work phones.” PRTM also offers office lunches and flex holidays.

Offices popping up everywhere

PRTM has “invested significantly over the past few years in upgrading its existing offices and opening new offices in key locations.” Upgraded offices include Washington, D.C., Chicago, Boston, New York, Silicon Valley, Orange County, London and Munich—and “more offices are expected in 2008.” A contact says, “Recent investments in our New York and D.C. offices suggest that the firm is more serious about investing in top locations. However, they are still below top-tier firm standards.” That said, most consultants say the offices are “very nice and modern.” According to one, “The only downside is that we've been growing so quickly that offices are crowded on Fridays with all-staff meetings.” The firm utilizes a hoteling model, “so territorial behavior is largely eliminated.”

Although some wish PRTM was based in downtown Boston, consultants have positive things to say about the Waltham, Mass., headquarters. A source says, “It is the best piece of real estate outside of Boston, with amazing views of the city. It is quite spacious and tranquil.” The Washington, D.C., office is “awesome,” in a “great location and great facility.” It's “in the heart of the city action, half a block from the White House.” And the “design really ensures that everyone has direct access to directors.” The Newport Beach facility has “high ceilings, open space and lots of storage area.” New York is “nicely decorated,” but “rapid growth has rendered the office size a challenge.” An insider remarks, “PRTM has a policy of fiscal responsibility that is exhorting at all levels in the organization, including the location of our offices outside of the major metropolitan areas.”

Grooming future leaders

At PRTM, “directors work by your side, as equals, on projects.” The firm’s “partner-to-staff ratio is only 1:4, which means partners spend the majority of their time actually doing consulting work.” This provides staffers with “a lot of opportunity to learn from people who have been in the business a long time.” We’re told that directors are “very accessible” and are “actively engaged on all client projects,” so junior employees are “not lost in the masses.” A contact says, “When you are putting in late hours, it is reassuring to see the director sitting there next to you working just as hard.” Most supervisors are “personable, funny and quite reasonable when it comes to work/life balance.” They also are “good teachers and mentors,” and “feedback is often in real time, which provides for quick improvements.” An insider remarks, “There is a genuine interest on the part of PRTM directors to teach others how to be directors, too.” A colleague adds, “It is inspirational to see how much time is given to developmental considerations when it comes to staffing.”

Some “fear that bureaucracy will creep in as we grow up to be a large consulting firm,” but currently the “hierarchy is flat,” and consultants are “leading client teams from day one.” One source says, “It is a lot of responsibility, but a great learning experience. It’s kind of a sink-or-swim model.” Client interaction “depends on the size of the team and the scope of work,” but many find themselves “almost always working on the most important problems with senior client management.” For some, “C-level exposure in large companies is low,” but this has been “improving over the past few years.” In general, “project responsibilities come quick and strong at PRTM.”

On-the-job training rules

Training at PRTM is “both official and unofficial.” The firm “utilizes external experts as well as subject matter experts within the firm,” and there are also “several online courses.” Official training offerings include “Friday morning webcasts, localized conference calls for industry groups, classroom training for consulting skills development, online webinars for firm management and conference attendance.” But some say the “most value comes from unofficial training,” because PRTM has an “unstructured approach to training and development.” A contact notes, “While a training plan is handed to new hires, few follow it and most of the training is on-the-job or through ad hoc workshops.” Respondents tell us that the firm has “no tracking or requirements” for training. PRTM has “revised training in the past years,” but even so, on-the-job learning and mentoring remain “the backbone of the training process.” One consultant comments, “PRTM has a saying that you will learn in dog years, and it’s true. Your exposure to different projects and situations, coupled with the high level of support from more senior staff, will bring you along very quickly.”

You’re welcome to stay or advance

PRTM’s promotion policy is “not strictly up or out.” The firm promotes “strictly based on performance, with expectations guided by a clear matrix of capabilities assigned to each level.” One source explains, “The expectations are more transparent than any other company or client I have ever worked with.” The firm “really tries to make each person successful at their own pace,” so it “does not run a simple ‘two years at each level or you are out’ policy.” According to a contact, “Some extremely successful people here have spent a couple of years more to get there.” Promotions are “based on merit” and the firm has “no ceiling”—PRTM “expects everyone to be able to become a partner in the firm someday.” But for those who are “unwilling or unable to become a partner, we welcome them to become career consultants.” Staff can progress from entry level to partner in “about seven to nine years, if they have the will and aptitude to do so.” The firm “runs in six-month cycles, which allows for more opportunities in any given year for promotions.”

Female consultants are few, but growing

“PRTM is very receptive to women,” but “there aren’t too many women at the firm, and very few in senior management.” Insiders admit, “We don’t have as many women as we’d like,” but “there are currently efforts underway to address this, so the numbers may get better.” The firm is “doing the best it can with our policies to attract more.” One source says, “As a female, I have received a lot of support and mentoring.” PRTM is “responsive to specific needs, while balancing that with the challenges of a demanding profession,” but “retention of women at more senior levels can be difficult due to travel requirements.” Insiders

say PRTM is “making progress” and “has a real focus on attracting women to the consulting ranks.” According to one source, “PRTM has several initiatives to recruit, hire and develop women in the firm. Although the current teams are still heavily male, these initiatives have resulted in an influx of female consultants in the firm over the past year.” However, many feel there’s still “a long way to go.”

The nonissue of diversity

Representation of ethnic minorities can differ by location. Washington, D.C., has “such a diverse team, with a ton of different nationalities represented.” In fact, “minorities are more like the majority.” And in Waltham, “about half or more of PRTM consultants are minorities.” A source based there says, “PRTM is probably the most diverse consulting firm I’ve seen. Every project I have been on included minorities.” Its “hires come from a wide range of backgrounds,” and it “has minorities in senior leadership.” Yet as one contact observes, “PRTM, unfortunately, has lower representation of certain minorities—for example, African-Americans—than we would like, possibly because we don’t have a dedicated program to try to increase it.” A Newport Beach based insider is “thoroughly impressed with PRTM’s genuine openness to diversity,” explaining, “It’s in the firm’s DNA to hire consultants with wide-ranging cultural and professional backgrounds. PRTM’s diversity truly enriches its ability to provide unique perspectives to the client, as well as meaningful personal relationships within the firm.” A colleague adds that PRTM “prides itself on diversity, and deserves a gold star in this area.”

Similarly, PRTM has “no issue with sex, gender or sexual orientation.” Insiders say the “most prevalent aspect of PRTM’s policy toward gays and lesbians is that it’s not an issue.” In fact, the firm has “an openly gay partner,” and it has “never been an issue.” And although there is “no formal GLBT mentorship program,” the firm is “very open to GLBT staff.” A contact says, “GLBTs are no different than non-GLBTs at PRTM. We are one family.”

Making an impact

PRTM supports “a number of activities driven toward community involvement and going green.” It encourages consultants “to get involved in community service activities ranging from Toys for Tots, Habitat for Humanity, Run for Care and local soup kitchen support.” There’s a voluntary program called Make an Impact, which is “run entirely by consultants” and designed to “drive local community involvement.” The initiative is “strongly supported” by PRTM’s leaders and focuses on activities that are “tailored to the consulting lifestyle.” In addition, many staffers have “time to pursue multiple pro bono consulting opportunities because of the flexibility in work/life balance at PRTM.” On top of the causes to which PRTM offers ongoing support, “when a unique opportunity to serve the community presents itself, the firm is quick to lend a helping hand.” Recently, “there have been some [community service] pursuits that have significantly increased in visibility.” One consultant remarks, “PRTM-ers do an excellent job of balancing client commitments with philanthropic efforts, and community involvement is a growing priority within PRTM as a whole.”

Gallup Consulting

The Gallup Building
 901 F Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20004
 Phone: (202) 715-3030
 Fax: (202) 715-3041
www.gallupconsulting.com

LOCATIONS

Washington, DC (HQ)
 43 offices in 20 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Brand Management
 Customer Engagement
 Economic & Public Opinion Polling
 Employee Engagement
 Leadership & Succession
 Market Research
 Strengths-Based Development
 Talent Acquisition

THE STATS

Employer Type: Division of the Gallup Organization
Chairman, President & CEO: James K. Clifton
2008 Employees: 2,300
2007 Employees: 2,000 +



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Name is practically a household word"
- "One-trick pony"
- "Great thought leadership"
- "Research shop"

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #1 – Hours in the Office
- #1 – Offices
- #1 – Overall Satisfaction
- #2 – Firm Culture
- #4 – Best Firms to Work For
- #4 – Interaction with Clients
- #4 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #5 – Work/Life Balance
- #17 – Travel Requirements

Diversity

- #1 – Best Firms for Diversity
- #2 – Diversity for GLBT
- #2 – Diversity for Women
- #3 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- "Ability to define your job around what you want to do"
- "Nonhierarchical organization with a tremendous amount of freedom and autonomy"
- "Pay-for-performance culture"
- The amount of travel is set by consultants on an individual basis

DOWNERS

- "Sometimes no vacation policy means no vacation"
- "Technology and knowledge management systems are behind the curve"
- Silo mentality interferes with communication
- "You have to learn a lot on your own"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.gallup.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Hearts and minds

Gallup Consulting doesn't use the traditional consultancy business model. The Washington, D.C.-based firm disregards stiff, analytical practices like cost reduction, IT solutions and due diligence, focusing instead on what it considers to be the true organic building blocks of an organization—people and their feelings. Gallup believes revenue and profit are driven by the emotional engagement of employees and customers with the company. Its services primarily facilitate the cultivation of relationships, counting among its practice areas talent acquisition, leadership and succession, strengths-based development and, of course, employee engagement and customer engagement.

Poll parent

The company is a division of The Gallup Organization, a multifunctional entity famous for its public opinion research. Conducted through random-dial phone calls, The Gallup Organization's polls track public attitudes on political, social and economic issues, with perhaps the most widely reported subject being the U.S. presidential election (for which, aside from a few rare instances, the poll has accurately predicted the results). Although the research is often conducted in collaboration with media or academic institutions, Gallup is able to maintain a reputation for independent objectivity.

It all started in 1935, when Dr. George Gallup gave up advertising and formed the American Institute of Public Opinion (which later was renamed for him). Gallup died in 1984, but the business was thriving and still using his research techniques. In 1988, his sons, Alec and George Jr., negotiated a merger of the company with Selection Research, Inc., a recruitment services firm that "fit" employees with new positions using structured psychological interviews. The combined entity, still operating under the Gallup name, grew over the next decade, expanding into consulting, printing and management education.

Bring out the best in people

The consulting outfit believes the greatest returns are realized through investments in employees. Committed workers lead to improved retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty and safety. To aid clients in identifying and delivering what their employees need, the firm offers its trademark strategy: the Gallup Path. The Path is a mapped chain of consequences that links individual contributions to the overriding financial goals of a company. Points along the chain include identification of strengths, effective management and confirmation of the compatibility of a worker and his employers. Gallup's client projects don't concentrate on any single point in the Path, but rather integrate all points to promote strong returns in value—sustainable growth, higher profits and rising stock prices.

The Path was an outgrowth of the firm's research in management sciences, economics and psychology. Its own studies have revealed that satisfied employees are not only more productive, but also more likely to weather stress and periods of disruption. Retaining indispensable talent through difficult markets is an enormous advantage, and it leads to sustained growth when the market normalizes. Strong leadership is also essential, so Gallup offers executive coaching, giving corporate officers unbiased outside feedback.

Don't forget everyone who isn't on the payroll

Gallup also makes sure to address the sine qua non of doing business: the customer. Its research has distilled customer engagement down to 11 attributes, which it calls the CE11. These attributes, all of which can be influenced through advertising, public image, purchasing experience and other factors, include overall satisfaction, intent to repurchase, intent to recommend, pride in a brand, belief in the integrity of a brand and other emotional values. To most effectively help a client influence these factors, Gallup has assembled a comprehensive database that contains intelligence from almost three million customers, 16 industries and 53 countries. The goal, the firm believes, should always be to transform transactions into relationships.

Several years ago, Gallup was hired by a global automobile manufacturer following that company's discovery—via its own market research—that it ranked dead last in owner satisfaction and loyalty. Gallup's analysis of the problem revealed that customers were satisfied with their vehicles, but unhappy with customer service, especially when seeking repairs or maintenance at company dealerships. The firm designed an initiative for the manufacturer, involving manager training, performance measurement and executive advisory, by which each dealership could align with the overall goals of the brand and begin to consistently meet standards of customer service. The plan was a success: Within two years, 87 percent of the manufacturer's customers reported increased satisfaction with the dealerships.

Plotting ideas on paper

Gallup's notions of successful business strategies often appear in print through its Gallup Press unit. Some of its management books include *First, Break All the Rules*, a best-selling primer on employee engagement; *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, a follow-up on the subject, also a best seller; and *How Full Is Your Bucket*, an examination of, not the fullness of buckets, exactly, but rather the effect brief exchanges can have on relationships, health and productivity. Most recently, in March 2008, Gallup Press came out with *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*, an analysis of Muslim points of view gathered from polling almost 40 countries. Issues addressed include religious extremism, women's roles, democracy and thoughts on the Western world.

Gallup also produces a monthly online magazine called the *Gallup Management Journal*, aimed at executives and offering case studies and management research.

GETTING HIRED

A long haul

Gallup staffers don't beat around the bush: "It takes a long time to get hired here," as the hiring process "is very intensive and thorough." One recent hire recalls, "I went through five phone interviews and seven face-to-face interviews." The company strives to find the perfect fit—for example, a newbie who had seven interviews reports, "As a positive note, I applied for a completely different role and was placed in this position based on talent and experience." And, the intense process is evidently worth it; as one happy staffer insists, "Gallup is tough to get into, but once you are in, you see why."

As part of the process, candidates can expect "deep psychometric testing" that's conducted both online and "through structured behavioral interviews," which take place over the phone. The tests are "designed to measure an individual's many talents" and to determine "if those talents match the job requirement talents." A senior source adds, "Most people are weeded out between the web test and the phone interviews, and so only those who are 95 percent suitable for the job are granted in-person interviews."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Positively independent

Gallup staffers rave about the "progressive, innovative, positive and mature" culture at the firm, where there's an obvious "passion for ideas, people and performance." "We really enjoy working together and appreciate each other's unique strengths," says an engagement manager. Plus, adds another, "everyone has a voice, and everyone feels very connected to the mission of helping people from around the world be heard."

Independence is also particularly valued. A source explains, "Everyone is treated like an adult who can manage his own time, productivity and development. Accordingly, we have considerable freedom in what we do and how we do it, within some basic guidelines." A consultant is pleased to report, "I have the ability to tailor my role to best fit who I am as a person." Consequently,

sums up a colleague, the “hardworking, high-performing and entrepreneurial” environment is a good fit for “those who can work independently, responsibly and with little supervision.”

Meet your mate

In addition, we’re told that “friendships and personal relationships are encouraged,” both among peers and across staff levels. We’re told by staffers, “I consider both my supervisors and my clients to be friends,” and “My supervisor is one of my three best friends at work.” As a side note, an insider remarks, “it appears that it is very romantic to work here, because we have a lot of husbands and wives who work here, many of whom met on the job.”

Back to business. As a respondent notes, “Our supervisors here do not micromanage. They are advocates for us, and ensure that we know what is expected of us; they recognize us, and help us learn and grow.” “My manager is extremely supportive, motivating and fun to be around,” agrees a senior consultant. “She is the perfect fit for an independent person like me.” A colleague adds, “My manager cares about me as a person,” while one consultant proclaims, “We have the world’s greatest managers.”

Work when you want to

One of the best things about the management style, we’re told, is that “consultants are given complete freedom to set their schedules.” A longtimer explains, “Our pay-for-performance model forces consultants to make choices—you can scale back to have greater balance or ramp up at times when you desire additional earnings.” Moreover, he adds “we have no policies around vacation, sick days, holidays or PTO at all.” Instead, there are “only outcomes to hit.” The firm has also “implemented technology to allow every employee to work from home.” A principal comments, “Gallup cares about performance outcomes much more than how much one looks like they are working.” And in general, we’re told, “there is a respect for home life.” A consultant notes that “individuals on teams will move mountains to allow co-workers to take a bit of time off.” Another staffer adds, “We value the individual worker in a holistic way and respect everyone’s need to do the right thing for family.”

“However,” a recent hire warns, “there are high-pressure projects that require a lot of personal time. In other words, there is sometimes an implicit obligation to work on the weekends.” And although the workload is self-driven, “Gallup has a lot of high achievers, so most people thrive on a heavy workload.” Still, a senior consultant notes, “if you’re working too hard, it is your own choice and likely driven by your obsession with money.” Or motivated by a love of the work—another senior source insists, “The weekend work I do is because I love it, not because I have to.” “Luckily,” adds a colleague, “the work is very fun, rewarding and exciting.”

Travel that suits you to a tee

Similarly, consultants can choose the amount of travel they wish to take on. There’s no “firm requirement,” but instead travel “is a personal choice.” A principal explains, “Gallup doesn’t mandate travel except for occasional trainings and company meetings.” Other than that, an insider states, “we can take on as much or as little travel as we like. It is the consultant’s choice.” The respondent adds that “pay often will drive some consultants to travel more than they might ordinarily desire,” but insists, “it’s all about choices.” For example, one staffer who travels “140 to 160 days per year” says that he does so simply “because I choose to.” On the other end of the spectrum, a cohort who is never on the road comments, “Because I have a young family, I am not asked to travel, per my request.”

That being said, a higher-up points out that “clients come first at Gallup, so it is part of the culture to get to a client when needed.” Still, he adds, the firm “does an excellent job of using alternative communications (video conferences, for example) to keep us from traveling needlessly.” An unfortunate fact for those who do travel is that “we can only use our miles/points for company business.”

A wide variety of workweeks

With all this emphasis on choice, it's no surprise that staffers report anywhere from 40- to 75-hour workweeks. Similarly, the number of weekends worked per year ranges from many to none to all. "I decide," reiterates an insider, adding that "this can be a double-edged sword. When I get excited about a project, I put in a lot of hours." But as another puts it, "Because I like working in general, and my current work in particular, long hours are not a burden."

Pay for performance

Given all the variables, Gallup has a "specialized pay program based on the amount and value of the work we do." A longtimer explains, "This is a pay-for-performance company. In general, the more work you do, the more you can get paid." As a result, "additional pay is based on the size of the projects you work on and/or internal engagement scores," which means "you do not get regular pay increases." A source mentions that there is, however, a bonus that's based on internal metrics. We're also told there are additional "small payouts for various achievements, such as high customer ratings to top marks in a weight loss competition." In addition, says a principal, "We can buy stock in the company, which is only available to employees"—a real advantage now that the stock "is skyrocketing!" Other benefits include "employee matching within the 401(k) and contributions to flex-spend travel."

Respondents say health insurance "isn't the best" due to a high deductible, but as additional perks, Gallup offers a stipend "for commuting expenses," as well as "fitness and wellness benefits" and "free lunch on Fridays."

Room with a view

Gallup's flexibility makes it a particularly accommodating place for new parents. The Omaha office has "an on-site child care facility that's beautiful," not to mention an "on-site fitness center, on-site dry-cleaning services" and "free Starbucks coffee."

In general, staffers tell us their offices are beautiful, state-of-the-art" and "very comfortable." "Gallup cares very much about having premium office space," says a principal in Detroit. And this focus seems to apply to facilities across the country; a consultant in Los Angeles reports that the firm has a "top-tier office space in every city." "I am sitting here on the 30th floor of one of the most beautiful buildings of San Francisco overlooking the Transamerica building and the bay," states a San Francisco-based manager, adding, "I watch the fog roll in in the afternoon and the sun set behind the Golden Gate Bridge. My office is one of my favorite places in the city."

No need to move up

Luckily, good views are available for everyone—there's no real emphasis on getting to the top, since consultants are not on a conventional career ladder at Gallup. "We hire based on best fit to role, based on talent," explains a senior source, "so I am encouraged to expand, grow and develop but not change roles." A colleague echoes, "We hire for talent fit, and expect someone to thrive in their role indefinitely. Consultants advance within the role—achieving higher pay and titles—through experience, training and performance." And another adds, "You make more money by working on bigger and better accounts, not by moving into another role." Across the board, the motto seems to be, "Do what you do best."

Who needs a degree?

For that reason, perhaps, formal training doesn't seem to be a high priority at Gallup. Instead, training "isn't very defined" and largely comes in the form of "informal mentoring." A manager comments, "There is a formal learning management system in place; however, learning and development is often up to the consultants to go after themselves." He adds, though, that "there are several classes, formal and informal opportunities for training. There are opportunities to learn and grow." We're also told that "efforts are underway to improve this substantially."

For the moment, "much of the learning is done while working with more experienced people on projects." And for many staffers, that's more than enough. A source remarks, "I am learning so much every day from top leaders in the corporate world and how

they run their companies,” adding, “In my opinion, this is much more valuable than an MBA.” A senior consultant agrees that there is “absolutely never a dull moment intellectually, because someone is always doing something fascinating at Gallup.” Another remarks, “The bar is continually set higher and higher by our motivated consultants, and the best part is that I am constantly growing by being in such a high-performing culture.”

For those who plan to return to school at some point, that’s an option as well. A senior consultant says he “received a fully funded MBA” through the firm. However, he notes, “this is an exception to the rule of funding 50 percent, but it does happen for two to three people per year.”

Diversity’s a nonissue

Although we’re told there are “no formal diversity programs in place” at Gallup, staffers say the firm does foster a diverse workforce and is “very open and supportive of all lifestyles.” A principal insists, “We have so many women and so many successful women within our consulting practice that we really don’t think of it anymore as an issue.” An engagement manager agrees: “Our COO is a woman—as a woman myself, I have never felt like doors were not open to me that were open to my male counterparts.” A colleague adds, “I think we are very receptive to hiring, promoting and mentoring minorities; however, we could be more diverse in this area.” To that end, he continues, the firm is “recruiting at African-American colleges and within African-American associations.”

Polling for charity

Gallup also makes a strong effort to encourage community involvement, “both at the corporate level and at the local level.” A consultant explains, “We are very involved with the Thurgood Marshall Fund—our chairman served as its chair. We study health issues, and we do work with 2,000 schools at nominal rates.” The firm also runs a program called Community Builders. “Each city center has its own chapter, and votes monthly on how to distribute funds, and also coordinates volunteer activities.” For example, the Minneapolis chapter has “chosen to support children with developmental disabilities (financially), to provide holiday gifts to children on welfare and to support local food shelves.”

The Advisory Board Company

2445 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
Phone: (202) 266-5600
Fax: (202) 266-5700
www.advisoryboard.com

LOCATIONS

Washington, DC (HQ)

Mountainview, CA

Portland, OR

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Intelligence & Analytics
Clinical Research
Implementation Support
Leadership Development
Strategy & Operations Research
Workforce Performance

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: ABCO (Nasdaq)
Chairman & CEO: Frank J. Williams
2008 Employees: 960
2007 Employees: 855
2008 Revenue: \$219 million
2007 Revenue: \$189.8 million

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#10 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting

UPPERS

- “Positive name recognition”
- Focus on research creates an academic atmosphere

DOWNERS

- “Repetitive tasks”
- Salaries are generally lower than the industry mean

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.advisoryboardcompany.com/content/careers/overview.html



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Young, dynamic”
- “Research, theoretical consulting”
- “Excellent health care group”
- “Dull work”

THE SCOOP

Members only

D.C.-based Advisory Board Company consults on management, strategy and operations for clients in the health care industry, including hospitals, pharmaceutical and biotech companies, health care insurers and medical device companies. The firm also offers research services to academic institutions, working with university provosts, heads of student affairs and heads of administration. Its approach to business is unique among consulting firms for being membership-based, rather than client-based. To elaborate, the firm develops programs that target specific issues of business management or execution, then sells one-year or multiyear memberships to those programs. Members participate in the research and analysis of the programs, and though a few programs include direct billable expenses, the majority have a flat-fee structure based on a member's size and the total number of program memberships selected. The firm believes such a fee structure vastly increases the value of membership over time, while also allowing it to develop new programs alongside the more established fare.

The Advisory Board offered 32 different programs in 2007, in the areas of strategy, operations and management. The strategy programs focus on industry trends and broader issues, and are tailored for high-level company officers, board members and product line or marketing executives. The operations offerings focus on process improvement, cost reduction, productivity and quality improvement, and are designed for executives and general managers. The management programs, designed for HR executives, chief medical officers and general managers, focus on talent development, physician relations, leadership and succession planning.

Points on the Board

In fiscal 2008, the Advisory Board served more than 2,700 members, among them the top-14 hospitals in *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Hospitals ranking for 2008, 94 of the 100-largest health care delivery systems, and 20 major pharmaceutical and medical device companies. Its membership renewal rate for 2008 was 90 percent, 1 percent greater than 2007. Revenue for the year totaled \$219 million, a 15.3 percent jump from fiscal 2007.

A mile wide and an inch deep

The firm was founded in 1979 as the Research Council of Washington. With a total staff of five, the organization's motto was "any question for any company for any industry." This phrase was surely borne out by its early work, which included research on the European fountain pen market and child adoption in South Africa. The sheer breadth of the firm's attention worked against it, however, leaving it with no attractive expertise or specializations. However, in 1983, the same year the firm's current name was adopted, the Advisory Board set out to remedy its lack of specialization by forming a strategic research division aimed at the financial services industry. The results were promising; within a few years, every major retail bank in North America had become a member.

The Advisory Board's current incarnation was seeded by the new division created in 1986, focused on health care. By 1998, the firm had grown to more than 800 consultants and 3,000 members. Seeking to perpetuate the pointed focus that had propelled it out of the early days of obscurity, the Advisory Board spun off its corporate and banking practices as a public company in 1999 (the branch assumed the name Corporate Executive Board), leaving its health care practice as a lone entity.

The benefit of experience

The firm's knowledge of the health care industry is continually refined and reapplied. In an effort to transfer that depth of experience, it created H*Works, a program that plugs in pretested, preapproved practices for member client hospitals. Areas addressed by H*Works include emergency department performance, workforce management, revenue management, technology strategies, inpatient and surgical management, secondary staffing, profit enhancement and service-line growth. The program deploys teams who work with hospital staff to implement the changes and improvements permanently.

Lighting the path

Advisory Board professionals also take the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience at industry conferences and other events that provide a forum for the exchange of ideas. In February 2008 alone, top executives from the firm appeared at three different events. Chairman and CEO Frank Williams presented at the UBS 18th Annual Global Healthcare Services Conference in New York, CFO Michael T. Kirshbaum spoke at the Deutsche Bank Securities 2008 Small and Mid Cap Growth Conference in Naples, Fla., and VP Robert Musslewhite spoke at the Credit Suisse 10th Annual Global Services Conference in Phoenix. Williams and Kirshbaum also gave a joint presentation, in November 2007, at the CIBC World Markets Third Annual Mid & Small Cap “Best Ideas” Conference in New York.

This commitment to the transfer of experience is useful internally, as well. The firm provides two weeks of orientation training to new employees, imparting knowledge of health care operations and strategy, building a skill set for use of IT systems and introducing them to company culture. Further training and development programs are also available throughout the career arc.

GETTING HIRED

Start abstract, end concrete

The Advisory Board flirts with vagueness for a bit on its careers page, identifying the two most important employee attributes as “force of intellect” and “spirit of generosity.” Reading further, one realizes these traits can best be translated as “work well” and “work hard.” The firm says that it avoids, and will not foster, “the toughened personalities that come with a more overtly competitive staff at a large, hierarchical organization.”

More tangible details are then offered. Opportunities at the company are divided among six tracks: research, executive education, marketing and account management, H*Works (essentially a more on-site role consulting for hospitals), business intelligence (performance-based research and consulting), and administration and operations. Applicants are encouraged, however, to send their resumes to recruiting@advisory.com.

Frenzied pace

The interview process, once begun, proceeds quickly, with densely packed interviews. As an insider recalls, “The initial interview was an HR screening over the telephone. It was used to determine which department I would fit in with best, either because of experience or because of personality. Secondly, I was informed which department I would be interviewing with in person. I went to D.C., had five interviews in the span of five hours. Two of the five were over the phone, unique because of the interviewers’ schedules, and the rest were in person. I interviewed with two teams that day. We discussed past experiences, interests and some questions about the specific industry the team was focused on.”

FTI Consulting, Inc.

500 East Pratt Street
 Suite 1400
 Baltimore, MD 21202
 Phone: (410) 951-4800
 Fax: (410) 951-4895
www.fticonsulting.com

LOCATIONS

Baltimore, MD (HQ)
 55 offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Finance/Restructuring
 Economic Consulting
 Forensic & Litigation Consulting
 Strategic Communications
 Technology

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: FCN (NYSE)
Chairman: Dennis J. Shaughnessy
President & CEO: Jack B. Dunn IV
2008 Employees: 3,007
2007 Employees: 2,079
2007 Revenue: \$1 billion
2006 Revenue: \$708 million

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#15 – Hours in the Office
 #15 – Relationships with Supervisors
 #16 (Tie) – Compensation

Diversity

#12 – Diversity for Minorities
 #18 – Best Firms for Diversity
 #20 – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- "If you look at the top stories in *The Wall Street Journal*, we've probably been working on them for months before the *Journal* heard about them"
- Flexible schedules
- "The firm knows how to reward talent"
- Access to the intellectual resources of all business units

DOWNERS

- "So many different areas of expertise and business that it is difficult to stay focused on core business"
- Official training programs are not fully developed
- "Easy to get the impression that the firm is interested in only the bottom line"
- "FTI's brand is not marketed well"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.fticonsulting.com/web/about/Careers.html



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Growing reputation"
- "Repetitive, boring work"
- "Top-notch forensic accountants"
- "Could be more employee-friendly"

THE SCOOP

Thriving in the silver lining

FTI Consulting does its best when times are rough for everyone else—which means that business has been very good recently. The firm mainly focuses on services for companies that are facing trouble, whether economic, legal or regulatory. Clients include 79 of the Fortune 100 and 95 of the top 100 law firms in the United States. The firm also claims to have 15 to 20 percent of the world market share in economic consulting. Sixteen percent of its revenue currently comes from overseas, a figure FTI plans to expand. There are few industries that FTI won't handle, with clients coming from sectors including automotive, chemicals, retail, pharmaceutical, health care, insurance, real estate, financial services, energy, construction solutions and communications, media and entertainment. President & CEO Jack Dunn told *Accountancy Age* that the firm “would like to have a global brand where companies feel as comfortable using us as the Big Four.”

A bull in a herd of bears

As the most recent economic bubble began showing signs of weakness in 2007, FTI's revenue jumped 41 percent, soaring past expectations for 2007 by around \$100 million. So far, 2008 shows no signs of that growth slowing down. In April 2008, *Forbes* reported that “FTI's business is strong and ... is seeing a surge in demand” connected to the credit crunch. The number of billable consultants on staff grew by 94 percent from 2006 to 2007, and CEO Dunn expects the firm's forensic accounting section in particular to post major growth in 2008, since a recession pulls back the curtain that hides so many insider tricks during prosperous times.

When describing the firm, analysts love to use the phrase “strong fundamentals.” Investors jacked up FTI's stock price by 121 percent in 2007, prodded by earnings per share that increased 92 percent over the course of the year. However, many analysts expect the price to drop as the year progresses.

The nuts and bolts

FTI divides its services into corporate finance/restructuring, economic consulting, forensic and litigation consulting, strategic and financial communications, and technology. The corporate finance division focuses on financial and transactional issues, gathering a wide range of resources and experts to hunt for solutions. The economic consulting arm comprises two main sections: Compass Lexecon, which offers financial analysis of litigation, policy and regulatory issues all over the world, and Network Industries Strategies, which helps network industries like telecommunications, transportation, energy and electric power to move out of regulation and into competitive markets. Forensic and litigation consulting was the original focus of the firm way back in the 1980s, and it continues to be a major revenue generator. The technology group helps clients use technology to improve security, data discovery and analysis, and workflow management.

Strategic communication is handled through the firm's global subsidiary, FD International (formerly known as Financial Dynamics), which concentrates on improving brand, reputation and valuation through communications. FD was named Public Relations Firm of the Year in 2007 by the *Financial Times*, and International Consultancy of the Year in 2006 by *PRWeek*. Other prominent subsidiaries of the firm are FT Capital Advisors LLC, which helps clients find and execute investment opportunities, and FTI Palladium Partners, which provides interim management for companies on the rocks, having its experts step in as CEO, CFO, COO or CRO (chief restructuring officer).

Bring 'em on

The stream of distressed businesses knocking on FTI's door has been long and steady. For example, the firm's forensic accountants and forensic computer consultants collected, processed and analyzed data for an internal investigation at Refco. It also helped Tyco and its lawyers during their dealings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. And when Freddie Mac

was audited, FTI helped it investigate transactions and accounting policies. Other troubled clients have included Northern Rock, MF Global, Northwest Airlines, American Home Mortgage and Winn Dixie.

On the healthier side of corporate life, the firm's experts analyzed the effects of a proposed AT&T/Bell South merger, and their findings were later used by the Department of Justice, the Federal Communications Commission and many state regulators. For several years, FTI International has advised Credit Suisse, one of Europe's largest investment banks, particularly in the area of strategic communications for the asset management division and special situations.

Wanting to party with everyone else

However, too much focus on succeeding during hard times has occasionally left the firm vulnerable when the economy is on an upswing. In 2003, 80 percent of the firm's revenue came from restructuring, and as the latest economic boom shifted into high gear, FTI began creeping into "physician, heal thyself" territory. In 2004, its earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) had dropped by 18 percent.

Tired of this boom and bust cycle, FTI began a strong shift in direction in 2004. By 2007, thanks to a variety of acquisitions and concentrated diversification, its revenue from restructuring was only 26 percent, with technology and strategic communications especially pushing their way into the forefront. Chairman Dennis Shaughnessy told *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* in April 2008, "People ask us: Do you root for good times or bad times? We root for interesting times." However, as the firm's recent rise in fortune shows, the areas in which the firm has expanded continue to focus on distressed companies, even if not specifically on restructuring.

Snapping up the leftovers

Changing direction through acquisitions is nothing new for the firm. In fact, its whole focus on restructuring began with the buyout of two financial consulting firms in 1998. Before that, the firm had specialized in litigation consulting. Founded by Daniel W. Luczak and Joseph R. Reynolds Jr. in 1982 as Forensic Technologies International Corp., the firm had concentrated on finding and preparing expert witnesses.

FTI began a series of acquisitions in 2007, which continued as the new year dawned. By the middle of 2008, the total run included the purchase of 10 companies. This includes, most recently, the July 2008 pickup, for \$88 million in cash, of eDiscovery software provider Attenex Corporation, and the April 2008 purchase, for \$125 million in cash and stock, of private real estate consulting firm Schonbraun McCann Group. The group continues to operate under its own name as the real estate division of the firm's corporate finance practice. William Sutherland, an analyst at investment firm Boenning & Scattergood, felt that the benefits of the firm's shopping spree would really start to kick in during 2009, and maintained his rating of the firm as "market outperform." Plus, "acquisitions" don't only refer to companies—as CEO Dunn told *Kiplinger's*, another upside of doing well in hard times is that the firm can hire "rock star" consultants with little competition.

GETTING HIRED

No need to know the acronym

Insiders reports that FTI recruits at "approximately 25 schools around the country," including "Vanderbilt University, Texas A&M, Columbia, University of Chicago and UCLA." It also has a look around at the annual January meeting of the American Economic Association. A senior managing director says it's worth knowing that "FTI = forensic technologies international," since "it is on our recruit test and no one seems to get it correct." This fact may have outlived its usefulness, however, since the company reports that, officially, FTI is no longer—and has not been for years—an abbreviation for anything.

Choose your office wisely

The specific hiring process may vary between offices, but, overall, candidates are not “required to attend a specific number of interviews.” One higher-up explains, “It is a flexible process for each office and specific practice group to determine whether the candidate has the technical skills necessary to succeed at FTI and if the candidate will be a good fit from a cultural perspective.”

For the corporate finance practice in Dallas, we’re told campus hires normally have an initial on-campus interview followed by a “Super Day, where candidates from all schools in the region spend a day in our office in qualitative, quantitative and case study interviews.” An executive hints at the case study: “Typically, it is a restructuring/business turnaround case.” Similarly, in Charlotte, a director mentions that candidates have interviews on campus followed by an office visit, also called Super Day, which “consists of three to five interviews with various levels of management and a written case study.” Meanwhile, in Chicago, a source reports, “there is generally a one- or two-day interview process for all candidates, regardless of if they come from on or off campus,” adding that there are “no specific tests, although some will be exposed to a case study.”

In the economic consulting practice, a senior analyst notes, “Interviewees meet with two interviewers, in two separate interviews, each about a half-hour long. They are largely behavioral interviews. Interviewees are expected to discuss their background, including specific projects in work or school experience, and their interest in the firm. Really, the interview is just a conversation to see how the applicant handles himself and if they can explain something clearly and effectively. If the two interviewees agree, then the applicant will have a similar interview with the director of research, who ultimately decides on extending an offer.” “At the economist level,” adds a vice president, “we typically seek PhD-level candidates. If a candidate passes an initial screen based on his/her resume and a possible phone call or face-to-face at an economics conference, they will be invited to spend the day at the office. They will meet with a variety of people and present a paper at a luncheon. We are interested in individuals’ ability to work with data, to think through the analysis of complex questions and to produce quality work under pressure.”

And a director in Los Angeles says qualified candidates will have a “half-day of office interviews meeting three to four people,” whereas in Denver we’re told experienced hires can expect a test consisting of “short answer and problems from a case study lasting two-and-a-quarter hours. It primarily covers accounting, finance and valuation.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

F is for fun, or is it?

One senior managing director states, “Some employees jokingly refer to the firm as ‘Fun Times Incorporated,’” but the level of irony is not entirely clear. Few insiders describe the fun side of the firm and tend to be more reserved in their descriptions of its corporate culture, emphasizing that it is “fast-paced,” “challenging,” “professional” and “respectful.” A source reports, “FTI is very entrepreneurial and allows a fair amount of flexibility as long as you demonstrate the core values.” A Charlotte-based staffer adds that the firm strikes a balance between being “collegial but competitive,” while a colleague claims “the company rewards hard work, but does not promote competition among co-workers.” Others say the firm is “demanding yet flexible” and “intense, but supportive.”

A vice president remarks, “We work with a large range of very, very good academics,” and others agree that co-workers are “really intelligent people,” and are “often quoted experts.” Of course, working with “many brilliant people at the top of their fields” is enjoyable in its own way: As one staffer puts it, “It’s fun to rub elbows with Nobel Prize winners.” Plus, says a senior managing director in LA, “You meet a lot of brilliant people and you really feel that you are playing for a winning team,” especially since the firm “always has a position in the highest-profile deals.” “If it’s a complex merger, a thorny antitrust problem or a difficult securities case, we’re probably working on it,” insists an executive.

Friendly, at least on the surface

Some add that there is a “high degree of camaraderie” and that the atmosphere is “very friendly,” but others qualify that it’s “not necessarily tight-knit” and that “there are definite social cliques in the office.” Or, as a new hire in Chicago explains, the firm will “often host small parties, give away items (hats, water bottles) to employees and provide flu shots. But I think this is often superficial stuff to make the firm seem like a familial work setting.” And although we’re told by a few insiders that FTI is “very strongly team-oriented,” one new hire remarks that “analysts are not assigned to specific teams, but rather work as freelance mercenaries to any project that needs attention at the time.” As a result, he says, it can sometimes be hard to feel like part of a team at all.

Meanwhile, others warn that there’s simply a “lack of cohesive corporate culture” on the whole, which they attribute to the “large number of acquisitions.” A longtimer explains, “There have been so many acquisitions that it has been a challenge to successfully integrate and operate under a single banner.” Others add that the culture “depends to a degree on the office you are in.” Still, a director in Charlotte insists, “There is a definite push toward one FTI culture, merging the best of all of the practices and recent acquisitions.”

Forget face time

One area staffers do tend to agree on is hours worked: The average tends to be “50 to 55 hours per week.” And there’s no need to push above and beyond this time frame to get ahead—a new hire notes, “Work hours are usually left up to the employee, who can take on as much work above the minimum as they like.” Still, he notes, “in times of high demand, there is no question that analysts are expected to drop everything and provide help to the firm where needed.” An optimistic longtimer adds, “Sometimes the long hours for weeks on end or the emergencies can be a bit of drag, but there is always light at the end of the tunnel and often those are the most interesting engagements.” A senior managing director reports, “The firm tries to instill a work hard, play hard culture and does not encourage ‘face time.’” As a result, he continues, “If you have a project that wraps up and tomorrow is Friday, they encourage you to take the day for yourself.”

Balance is in the eye of the beholder

Insiders are less inclined to agree when it comes to how easily they can balance work with outside commitments. A senior managing director insists, “FTI is focused on balancing the needs of clients with staff, giving the flexibility to do so on a schedule that considers personal needs.” Colleagues concur that “there is flexibility to control when work gets done” and that “telecommuting is a terrific benefit to more balance.” A vice president adds that the firm will make special arrangements where necessary, stating, “Both my wife and I have had various health problems over the last decade. On one occasion, I was on disability for an extended period. The firm has been extremely supportive during these periods.”

Others say balance comes in peaks and valleys, explaining that it is not possible during deadlines, but is otherwise achievable. A senior source comments, “Due to the crisis nature of work in corporate finance, at times our schedules have limited flexibility, but the rest of the time I’m able to keep my schedule flexible, as long as I’m getting the work done.” And a longtimer agrees that the “work is project driven, so when you have critical deadlines, you tend to work longer hours. Then there are other periods when you are not as busy and you can recharge your batteries.” “It is give and take,” adds a director. “I make a point to take ‘no contact vacations’ once a year, and people on my project team know I am unavailable.”

Some respondents are more negative about their circumstances, grumbling that “the firm places too much pressure on employees to achieve high utilization rates,” and “if a project comes in last minute, they expect people to be available regardless of the day of week.” “Oftentimes, personal life falls off the wagon for weeks at a time,” laments a managing director who says he works most weekends.

Salaries at “the top of the market”

On the plus side, many staffers are compensated for overtime. A director explains that several practices pay “a utilization bonus calculated monthly and paid quarterly” for hours in excess of a set billable target. As such, a Chicago-based newbie warns, this fact “provides professionals an argument for asking for after-hours work.”

But, by and large, insiders say they “feel well compensated” and, “overall, FTI does a great job of making sure the compensation levels are at the top of the market.” In fact, notes a senior consultant, the “compensation is generally higher than industry average for experienced hires with relevant experience.” A senior analyst adds, “If you show a hard work ethic and some skill in client work, then you will see the benefit at the end of the year in raise and bonus, and during the year in terms of your opportunities and relationship with professionals.” Indeed, there’s an “annual discretionary bonus,” which we’re told is divvied out fairly.

Happy and healthy

FTI also offers, for those fully vested, a 401(k) match of “50 cents on the dollar up to 6 percent” and an “employee stock purchase plan” (which a longtimer says “has been very lucrative, given our stock performance”). The “health benefits are impressive,” including “full medical, dental and vision with optional flexible spending features.” There’s also a “strong amount of vacation time, even for new hires.” Others add that FTI “pays for home Internet access” and a BlackBerry, and also “allows personal use of company laptops.” Offices have “readily available snacks,” although “some of the office furniture (desks, etc.) could be updated.” One director enthusiastically mentions receiving “Red Sox tickets!”

Travel’s likely, but not a certainty

Plus, a managing director notes she gets to keep “the points I earn traveling for work.” And since “most people travel,” that’s a highly appreciated perk. In another plus, we’re told “the firm’s liberal policy about the class of flight goes a long way to help make this bearable.” Specifics of time spent on the road vary greatly depending on assignment, but usually fall anywhere “between 20 percent to 100 percent.” “We try to balance it out among our professionals over the long-term horizon,” reports a source. In addition, remarks a managing director, “it is unusual to have extensive (week after week) travel for more than three to 12 months.” A colleague explains, “There is a general effort to not have travel unless required by the client, and if so, to limit it to Mondays and Friday early afternoon. This seems to be relatively consistently applied.”

It’s also possible for staffers in some practices to get away with no travel at all. “FTI allows for people to work on a variety of matters,” explains a Charlotte-based staffer, “some of which have no travel requirements.” He adds, “In addition, FTI’s geographic reach allows for in-town assignments.” Junior-level consultants in certain groups tend to travel less, but even higher-ups may spend minimal time on the road, like one vice president who says he has “occasional travel every month or so.”

Ramping up training programs

Between work and travel, “finding time” for training “becomes difficult.” Historically, insiders say training has been “mainly on the job,” with new-hire-training as “the only official firmwide training” offered. Currently, though, we’re told that “FTI is making a concerted effort to improve its training at all levels of the firm, rolling out initiatives to help colleagues develop personally and professionally.” In addition, “staff are encouraged to seek outside courses they would like to attend.” A senior source in Denver says the firm provides “support (paying) for staff to pursue professional accreditations (test fee and materials) and other outside training,” and encourages attendance at “conferences selected by staff.”

Plus, many respondents agree that “on-the-job training is an excellent way for people to grow into their job and take on increasing responsibilities.” Although “there is no formal mentoring,” a senior analyst notes that “some analysts enjoy a good professional relationship that develops into a mentor-like program.”

Tee off with clients

And what better way to learn than by meeting with top clients early on? Higher-ups insist that staffers get “significant exposure to clients’ top management.” One senior managing director reports, “Our staff, down to our youngest consultants, often have opportunities to attend and interact with the upper levels of management.” And a director mentions the perk that consultants have the “ability to attend client functions and go on golf outings with clients from a fairly junior level.”

Take your time moving up

Insiders agree that FTI is a “meritocracy,” and that “promotions are based on contribution and ability more than tenure,” so “there is no time in grade, per se.” An executive remarks, “Consultants can advance at any rate, depending on their individual abilities and accomplishments.” And a vice president explains, “Some people settle in and are productive and comfortable at a certain level, and they are welcome to remain there indefinitely.” A colleague adds that “staff often make lifestyle decisions that permit them to remain at a level, rather than advance and take on additional responsibility.”

Then again, “others continue to change responsibilities over time,” and some staffers “have progressed all the way from the research staff to senior vice president.” And while there are no hard and fast rules, insiders say that, “on average, promotions seem to be about every two to three years.” But “since there are relatively few titles,” we’re also told that “advancement beyond the economist level can take a few years.” Keep in mind, as one recent hire warns, that “for an analyst to move on to the professional staff, they must get an advanced degree.”

No glass ceiling

In keeping with the focus on merit, a higher-up adds, “Speaking as a woman, there is no evidence of a glass ceiling or any consideration whatsoever of gender.” Others agree that “FTI clearly makes an effort to hire and retain women and to foster opportunities for career advancement.” But some note that “there is still room for improvement,” and that “it is challenging for women to maintain families and achieve partner status.”

In general, staffers say “there is a high awareness of the need for diversity in the workplace.” “The firm actively recruits minorities,” reports a longtimer, “and ensures their mentors and management are focused on their career.” And a senior managing director adds, “Due to the global nature of our business, professionals with specific foreign language skills are in high demand. This translates into significant opportunities for Spanish-speaking professionals or professionals with Chinese, Japanese and Korean language skills.”

Staff-initiated involvement

Insiders say FTI makes an effort to contribute to the community at large, but “on a limited basis” and “not extensively.” “Community involvement is done on an office-by-office basis and is organized by staff,” explains a consultant in Massachusetts, adding, “There is no corporate matching program for charitable giving.” Similarly, a California-based executive remarks, “It is very much left to employees to take the initiative, but the firm will support it.” In Dallas, an insider explains, “We have done ‘support the troops’ drives and food and clothes drives around the holidays.” And in LA, says a senior managing director, “Our activities include professionals serving as board members for charitable organizations, making financial contributions to various charities and not-for-profit organizations, participation in a Christmas toy drive and participation in a read-to-kids program in a local school.”

First Manhattan Consulting Group

90 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016
Phone: (212) 557-0500
www.fmcg.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)
Melbourne

PRACTICE AREAS

Acquisition Support • Advanced Marketing Segmentation • Business, Product & Customer Profitability • Corporate & Business Strategy • Credit, Market/Interest Rate & Operational Risk • Customer Experience & Sales Effectiveness • Distribution Planning & Tactics • Enterprise Risk Management • Expense Management, Process Reengineering & Benchmarking • Incentive Compensation • Joint Ventures/Outsourcing • Liquidity Management • Organic Revenue Growth Strategies, Value Propositions & Pricing • Organizational Design • Payments E-commerce Strategy • Performance Measurement • Risk Governance • Technology Strategy & Systems Architecture

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
President: James M. McCormick
2008 Employees: 75
2007 Employees: 75
2007 Revenue: \$30 million

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#5 – Financial Consulting

Quality of Life

#6 – Compensation

UPPERS

- Partner and top-level client exposure from early on
- “The pay is amazing”
- “Wide-open opportunities to work on what you want, once you prove yourself”

DOWNERS

- “The hours are all over the place”
- “Quiet hallways” with very little socializing
- “Many occasions where 5 percent more planning could avoid doing 25 percent extra work”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.fmcg.com/careers/overview.htm



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Great in financial services”
- “If you want to work I-banking hours but get paid consulting dollars, work here!”
- “Stepping stone for a lot of talent”
- “Little personality, quant-jocks”

THE SCOOP

Bank on it

First Manhattan Consulting Group aims its consulting expertise directly at the financial services industry. Its client work is driven by a focus on maximizing shareholder value, with a bias toward objective factual analysis, new research and modern business methods. FMCG consultants are most at home with broad assignments related to growth and diversification strategies, risk management, merger planning and integration, expense control and line-of-business management.

Since the firm's inception in 1980, it has completed more than 2,500 projects in the financial services industry. Today, three-quarters of its workload at any given time will be in the service of repeat clients. FMCG has worked with at least 50 institutions more than 10 times each, and in the case of its top client institutions, more than 100 times each. The firm's work history includes assignments with more than 50 of the largest U.S. bank holding companies, major international banks from 22 countries, insurance carriers, financial services firms and national brokerages.

Well-seasoned captain

James M. McCormick, a founder and current president of FMCG, carries a stacked resume. Thirty years of consulting to financial institutions honed his expertise in retail and commercial banking, and gave him functional experience with strategic planning, acquisitions, marketing and management information systems, to name a few. McCormick has testified before the U.S. Senate Banking Committee, and has made over 150 speaking appearances for financial services industry groups, among them the Bankers Roundtable, American Bankers Association, Bank Marketing Association, Bank Administration Institute, Consumer Banking Association, New York State Bankers Association, Institute of International Bankers and the Robert Morris Association. McCormick has also appeared on CNN, CNBC and other broadcast venues, and has been widely quoted in national publications like *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune* and *Time*.

Carving a niche

No matter the credentials or influence of its founders, FMCG couldn't spring fully formed into the world like Athena from the head of Zeus. The firm has, over the years, cultivated specific courses of action for projects that distance it from other consultancies. Zeroing in on strategy, risk management, finance, technology and productivity, FMCG first determines a client's fundamental source of shareholder value. It then defines benchmarks for key lines of business, including goals for maximum achievable return on equity and corporate growth. Integrated into this process is FMCG's Financial Personality® (FP) marketing system, a predictive model of consumers' product requirements, purchasing behaviors and potential attitudes toward fees or interest rates.

The company can apply the FP system in a number of ways. For a money center bank, it used the system to develop a customer segmentation process for delinquent credit card accounts that led to easier identification of customers likely to turn into high-risk accounts. This allowed the bank to reduce its write-off rate for bad accounts and boost results by the collections unit. For a major insurance company, FMCG used FP to identify which existing customers were most receptive to a financial plan. Calls by the client's agents bore out the results, with an above-average percentage of appointments made for follow-up or plan creation.

The firm's risk management practice also covers a broad set of topics within the financial services sector. Recent efforts have involved the implementation of risk-based pricing and performance measurement capabilities, deposit valuation, balance sheet management, including interest rate risk-taking assessment, designing a senior governance committee to better assess risk/return and capital management.

Homegrown

FMCG staffers are cultivated with a similar intensity. Consultants who sign on with FMCG are run through a series of analyst training programs, led by the firm's veteran professionals, officers and academics. The initial program serves as an introduction to the fundamental skills used in the business, while subsequent sessions cover additional skills necessary to be a successful analyst. Newbies are also assigned to a senior mentor who will further supplement the side-by-side learning in the office.

Even beyond the greenhorn period, staff can enroll (or perhaps be enrolled) in knowledge-building sessions to enhance their skills in public speaking, coaching and writing. The firm also sponsors a regular series of industry speakers, providing insight into current trends or serving as bellwethers for approaching ones.

Papers, proclamations and podcasts

FMCG maintains a prominent spot in the industry, not just through client work, but by publishing a series of value-based management newsletters. These papers are made available to financial institutions, journalists, bank analysts and academics, and spell out the firm's views on the state of business, such as what metrics best measure shareholder returns, the value of technology management and the drivers of single-branch deposit growth in banks. Additional topics include risk committee governance, enterprisewide risk management and asset-liability management. FMCG's consultants also give presentations at investor and industry conferences, including the National Academy of Sciences Workshop, the World Research Group Auto Finance Summit, the BAI and the RMA Annual Conference on Capital Management.

Slipping into yet another medium, the firm has transmitted a series of podcasts, titled *On Banking*, over BankNet 360 radio. The four installments, two released in November 2006 and one each in February 2007 and April 2007, elucidate issues such as cross-selling during customer service calls, marketing trends and margin pressures in retail banking.

GETTING HIRED

More than a firm handshake

FMCG recruits at specific "elite" schools, predominantly Harvard, Cornell, UPenn, MIT, Georgetown and Princeton. We're told that "first-round interviews are generally on college campuses with firm partners or other senior consultants," and are "followed up by a 'super Saturday,' where partners and other professional staff give each candidate five to six interviews." "All interviews will contain a case question and a qualitative portion," but a recent hire says of the case question, "We like to think we are very clever here, so do not expect a typical one." Examples include, "Assume you're running a riverboat casino. How many quarters do you need on Friday to last you until Monday?" and "How many *Borat* videos should a movie store in a town of 30,000 residents have stocked when it first came out?" An insider advises, "Applicants should be curious, confident and ready to get their hands dirty," warning, "this is not a firm for people who are nothing beyond a good smile and a good resume."

Get your feet wet

Summer internships are a good way to feel things out and see if the firm is a good fit—especially since interns are treated as full-time employees and have plenty to do. A current top-level staffer says his internship was an "outstanding experience that helped validate my choice of consulting and working with a smaller/specialist firm." And a new hire recalls that, as an FMCG intern, "I was not just doing busywork. I was put on projects and asked to do some real client analysis. It was hard work for 10 weeks."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Strictly business

And work—hard work—definitely comes first at FMCG: “The culture here is strictly business,” we’re told. Senior sources say the firm “is very achievement-focused” and intent on “being the best at what we do for clients.” This is not a work hard, play hard type of environment: The firm projects a “very classy image and does not tolerate boorishness.” While staffers are “pleasant and friendly and very willing to help with work-related questions,” they’re also “not very social,” which makes things “a little blah.” “The office is very quiet and people do not make much time for socializing,” a new hire reiterates, while a colleague comments, “People are friendly,” but there’s a “bit too much of an emphasis on working long hours and presenting a real intelligent front.” An analyst reports, “I can’t say there’s a huge coterie of FMCG employees that go out partying every weekend, but I’ve definitely met up with co-workers and their friends for nights out on the town.” It’s also possible that things are easing up a bit: “The firm’s culture is consistently improving,” says another consultant, and a co-worker adds that “monthly happy hours have made the younger people in the office come together a bit more and have created a slightly more social atmosphere in the office.”

Working together

It also helps that staffers aren’t overly competitive. A managing vice president comments, “Having worked at traditional consulting firms and experienced the up-or-out cultures, I find FMCG to be an extremely pleasant environment, where we worry about our work and how we can each become better, as opposed to how to outdo our peers.” Worrying about their peers’ performance seems the furthest thing from these consultants’ minds; as an analyst puts it, “We are really good at what we do. For such a small firm, it is amazing how successful we are in the financial services industry.”

Work comes first

With such a heavy focus on output, it’s perhaps no surprise that most staffers say they have a hard time striking a good work/life balance, and that balance is “not a top priority” at the firm. Workweeks average around 65 to 70 hours, and we’re told that even when between projects, “you still generally keep longer-than-normal hours.” Consultants are “often encouraged to put the firm first, e.g., lots of weekend and evening time in the office and constant travel,” explains one insider who works most every weekend. “For some colleagues,” he adds, “family and social life are lower priorities than time in office or with clients.” But there may not always be a choice, as “during the week, there is little time to focus on anything other than work,” a colleague chimes in. “All-nighters and all-weekend marathons” are both palpable possibilities, and one respondent notes that “there have been cases where you find out on a Thursday that you need to be in Australia for the next two months starting the following week.” Another cynically remarks, “While the partners pretend they care about work/life balance, in reality they will ask you to do work at any time of day and on any day of the week.”

Still, a handful of staffers do say it’s possible to have some time off. An analyst explains, “The structure of your hours is dependent on who you’re working for. Some of the managers prefer to leave weekends free, which means extended hours during the week. Others have no qualms about having staff work weekends, but that’s balanced out with generally earlier nights throughout the workweek.”

Plan ahead

“The key” to having balance, reports a senior engagement manager, “is to plan ahead and block out personal time—weddings, travel, etc., before getting staffed on the next project.” Echoes an executive vice president, “The key is being proactive in managing the workload, staying ahead of deadlines and planning. This is not always perfect, but those that do well—both professional and personally—have figured out how to work within the fast-paced work environment at FMCG.” An analyst

explains, though, that while “concrete obligations/appointments can be managed,” it’s still usually the case that “looser plans like dinner with friends usually remain tentative until the last minute.”

Long stints Down Under

Experiences differ when it comes to travel at the firm, and we’re told that “the amount of travel is highly variable at FMCG, depending on the location of the client and the project.” Typically, the retail practice travels most, while the marketing services practice and the risk management practice head out the least. Destination makes a difference in how tough the schedules are, as well. An insider explains that “travel within North America is generally very reasonable,” and a policy is in place for return trips home on weekends. However, he adds: “there are some challenges with people being posted to Australia/New Zealand/Southeast Asia for extended periods of time with relatively thin benefits/perks”—usually for one to two months, and “sometimes longer.” A newbie notes that “travel on short notice is common.”

To put FMCG travel demands into perspective, a higher-up justifies travel as a means for staying in business: “Without travel, one would not have the ability to develop strong client relationships, even for the younger consulting staff. Without stronger working relationships, you do not sell work. If you are not selling work or successfully executing that work and making recommendations that move the client to action, then the firm loses its edge. If the firm loses its edge, then top-tier clients will not want to hire the firm. If the firm is not hired, then ... Therefore, travel (within reason) in the consulting business, especially when the goal is to be the best at what you want to do, is a must-do.”

The payoff

It does seem that all the hard work pays off, at least in the literal sense: Insiders say “no one goes hungry at FMCG.” One analyst in New York goes so far as to claim that “the firm is easily the top-paying consulting firm in the country,” adding that “the compensation scheme is competitive with, if not better than, many investment banks, private equity firms, etc.” In addition to base salaries, FMCG makes a “401(k) contribution of 12 percent of your total compensation (including bonus), up to the government limit of \$29,500 [for 2007],” which, an associate adds, “is not a match, meaning people get the contribution whether or not they contribute their own money.” The one catch is that it “requires three years to become 100 percent vested,” but we’re told that “the vesting period is also short by industry standards.”

There are also “very generous medical benefits” including a firm-based “medical plan that reimburses staff for any charges that are not reimbursed by our insurance company.” In addition, “graduate school is reimbursed for those who agree to return,” and an analyst adds that “ideas to improve the efficiency of the firm are acknowledged with significant monetary awards.”

In terms of giving back, we’re told the firm is not especially involved in the community at large, and philanthropic activities are more-or-less “ad hoc.” FMCG “doesn’t support any specific charities,” though many staffers say they “really wish it did.” Still, “employees are encouraged to take part in community activities” of their own volition.

Limited luxuries

Other perks, however, “are pretty limited”; the best, perhaps, being that “the firm funds food and drink for monthly employee happy hours” at various hot spots, plus a “blockbuster Christmas party.” A recent hire reports, “We are also given a high-powered laptop on the first day that you can use for both business and personal items,” and in addition, employees “are able to keep airline, hotel and credit card points.” Respondents say their offices are “fairly outdated, with boring white walls,” but “revisions are planned” and there’s a “pantry with drinks refilled daily plus free coffee and tea,” as well as “bagels and doughnuts on Wednesdays.” An analyst notes, “After the first year, analysts have their own, or shared office spaces with doors. By the second year, senior analysts have offices with windows.”

As work is the top priority at FMCG, staffers cite “C-level client exposure as one of the perks of the firm.” An analyst says he has “been lucky enough to get an excessive amount of exposure to clients’ top-level management. This is probably fairly common at the firm.” Another agrees, “Client interaction at FMCG is incredible. I was sitting in board meetings before I’d

worked at the firm for a month. I was leading meetings with senior executives before I'd finished my first year." And if there was any doubt left in your mind, a consultant states, "FMCG offers leadership and opportunity from day one."

Thrown in the deep end

It's not unusual for staffers to be thrown into high-pressure situations, since most training is "trial by fire." We're told by some that the "formal training is terrible," although "there are several weeks of official training led by the firm's upper management and B-school professors." However, a newbie comments, the less-than-inspiring official training "is more than made up for by the hands-on experience we get the moment we start working on a project." Some staffers do "wish there was a better mentoring system in place," but others say "it is common practice for partners to spend hours coaching junior staff." That personal coaching doesn't go unnoticed by consultants, some of whom go so far as to regard their supervisors as "friends." A recent hire notes, "More than once, my supervisors have gone to bat for me, and all of them show a genuine interest in my career development." But there's no question that "analysts are expected to hit the ground running and to learn fast." This roll-up-your-sleeves mentality means that "skill and achievement is valued over labels."

It also means it's possible to move up the ladder at a nice clip. "Well-performing analysts reach associate level in two-and-a-half to three years," reports one higher-up. A colleague adds, "Analysts out of college can have a career track all the way to becoming partners," noting, "As a matter of fact, 35 percent of our partners started in the firm as analysts!"

Still a boys' club

As insiders report, those partners are also all male—there's "not a single female partner" at the firm. While some respondents say FMCG "is a fair company, not one that pays lip service to diversity but actually has a locker-room atmosphere," others note it's "more than 70 percent male." A female analyst states, "The women that are at the firm are fantastic and wonderful to work with; however, they are very few in number." That said, a colleague comments, "I think the firm is truly ... happy to promote any women who decide to stay and perform well." A managing vice president admits that, "while looking at the number of women in senior positions, one might think the firm is not receptive to women," but emphasizes that "the reality is quite different."

Sources agree that the firm is a "meritocracy" and that "nobody cares if you're straight or gay—it's a nonissue," but most also observe that it's lacking in diversity and "needs a lot of improvement" in that area. Although there's an "international crowd," one consultant states, "I don't think there is a single Hispanic or African-American at the firm. We don't even celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day."

Corporate Executive Board

1919 North Lynn Street
 Arlington, VA 22209
 Phone: (571) 303-3000
 Fax: (571) 303-3100
www.executiveboard.com

LOCATIONS

Washington, DC (HQ)
 Chicago, IL
 San Francisco, CA
 Scottsdale, AZ
 West Chester, PA
 London
 New Delhi
 Sydney

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Finance
 Financial Services
 Human Resources
 Information Technology
 Procurement & Operations
 Legal & Governance
 Sales & Marketing
 Strategy & Management

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: EXBD (Nasdaq)
Chairman & CEO: Thomas L. Monahan III
2008 Employees: 2,500 +
2007 Employees: 2,350 +
2007 Revenue: \$532.7 million
2006 Revenue: \$460.6 million



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Growing fast"
- "A little like a call center"
- "Game-changing model"
- "Little client exposure"

UPPERS

- Supportive colleagues
- "Face time has little value"

DOWNERS

- Must "fit their mold"
- Compensation is weaker than at peer companies

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.executiveboard.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Young and hungry

Corporate Executive Board is the largest network of major executives in the world, drawing on the collective experiences of member firms to share the practices research, analysis and tools. Despite its somewhat stodgy-sounding name, CEB is a young and fast growing company, both in its history and its employees. In fact, the firm has a reputation for hiring people fresh out of college. However, there's nothing untested about its over 4,700-strong client list—CEB members include 80 percent of the Fortune 500 and 70 percent of the Fortune 100, in addition to a variety of nonprofit organizations.

Thousands of heads are better than one

The main talking point for reps from CEB is that it lets members avoid “reinventing the wheel” when facing issues similar to those of other companies. The firm does this by pooling the collective knowledge of its members, grinding that information through its own research and computations, then offering the results back to the members. For example, technology managers can quickly learn how peers dealt with a particular type of software, or CFOs can glean tips for handling Sarbanes-Oxley requirements. Members receive access to decision-support tools, best practices research, executive education, customized research and the firm's program content database. CEB's research focuses on corporate strategy, operations and general management. It regularly polls members to find out which issues are most important to them. In May 2008, the firm planned to hold its first conference, bringing together members from all of the industries that it serves to discuss pressing topics. Members aren't required to participate in each individual research project, but more than 90 percent do.

CEB currently offers more than 50 programs to members, divided by practice area and the size of the corporation or nonprofit organization. Members cannot normally access information in programs to which they don't belong, but the firm tries to accommodate them if the request is isolated. Although originally limited to corporations with annual revenue of at least \$750 million (or their nonprofit peers), in 2005 the firm began offering specialized programs for midmarket enterprises with annual revenue between \$50 million and \$750 million. The annual membership fee varies depending on the size of the company, but averages around \$30,000. Over the years, CEB has steadily narrowed the focus of its programs, which allows it to better serve members' individual departments.

Keep moving and adapting

It all began with the Research Council of Washington, founded in 1979. The Research Council was originally created to answer “any question for any company for any industry,” but began to focus on the financial services industry in 1983, when it changed its name to The Advisory Board Co. As time went on, ABC began to take on more and more health care clients. In 1997, it decided to focus its primary attention on the health care sector, and spun off its corporate membership side as Corporate Executive Board. CEB went public in February 1999.

The firm has enjoyed strong growth in the last couple of years. In 2007, offices were launched in both San Francisco and Chicago, and in 2008, it opened an office in Sydney, Australia. Also in 2008, the five D.C. offices that had been scattered around the downtown area were moved to a new facility at the Waterview complex in the D.C. suburb of Arlington. There was concern that the move away from downtown would hurt the firm's reputation as a fun place to work, but CEB felt that, in addition to making things easier for commuters, the advantage of having all of its offices under one roof was worth it.

Enjoy your work

A variety of media outlets have given CEB high marks for the quality of life it affords employees. In 2007, *The Washington Post* named the firm one of the best 125 places to work in the D.C. area. Although it didn't make the cut in 2007, it was No. 51 on *Forbes'* list of the 200 Best Small Companies in 2006. In 2005, *Washingtonian* magazine praised CEB as one of the best places

to work in D.C. The publication especially highlighted the firm's commitment to community service, saying, "CEB encourages employees to give back to the community—and they do."

Plugging in and turning on

The firm has recently been trying to make its presence more pronounced in cyberspace. It bought the web site ITtoolbox in August 2007, an online community for IT professionals. CEB hopes to use the site as a platform to better connect with those in the IT field. In June 2007, in cooperation with investment bank Allen & Co. and others, CEB made an \$8.8 million investment in PayScale, a provider of online salary data. The service allows users to compare their salary to that of others with similar experience and job title.

GETTING HIRED

Combing campuses

Each year, CEB visits over 27 undergraduate campuses in the U.S. and U.K., in addition to a small group of top-tier graduate programs. In an average recruiting season, the firm hires over 150 applicants for internships and full-time positions. Interested candidates are encouraged to visit its careers web site to research the application process and current openings. After applying online—either via CEB's site or an on-campus career center—select candidates undergo first-round interviews on campus or over the phone. In the first- and second-round interviews, candidates should be prepared for behavioral-based questions and a writing exercise. Final-round interviews for research positions are case-based, and are conducted at CEB's Washington, D.C., offices on Fridays throughout the fall semester. Candidates spend the first part of the day learning about CEB, and interviews take place in the afternoon. Decisions are normally issued two to four weeks after the interview day.

In search of rising stars

CEB offers an internship program for undergraduate seniors, with most placements occurring in the summer months. Research internships are filled through on-campus recruiting efforts in the spring months. Positions are paid and are available in a variety of areas across the firm, including sales and research. Many CEB interns go on to become full-time employees. To be accepted to the program, candidates must have a minimum GPA of 3.0, and are expected to be involved with extracurricular or leadership activities on campus. Previous internship or work experience is recommended.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Frat-house culture

CEB strives to maintain an environment that strongly encourages professional and personal growth. Historically, "the culture has been great," but some feel there has been "some degradation in culture as the firm has gotten larger." With "lots of company-sponsored happy hours" and "supportive and nice" co-workers, the culture certainly can be "great for someone straight out of college who doesn't really know what they want to do." The firm employs "a lot of young people," and "there is an enormous drinking culture that CEB condones." Several insiders describe CEB as either a "fraternity" or "sorority." And recently, the frat house got bigger—the firm moved to "a new high-rise building that brings the entire D.C. part of the firm together for the first time in many years." Those who are looking to pave their own way may have a difficult time in this "cultish culture." One source says, "You either conform ... or you leave."

Make your way up and work less

Work/life balance at CEB is “strong, but harder to come by” in recent years. Hours range anywhere between 50 and 75 per week, with some junior-level staffers logging long hours, especially those in the revenue and research functions. For example, in the marketing and member services departments, “there are several mandatory days per month where you are required to work 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. without much break time.” But more senior consultants “can achieve a healthy balance.” One insider says, “I typically work two to three weekends a year, [and] take at least one three-week vacation.” CEB’s is “very much a ‘whatever it takes to get the job done’ culture,” but if you’re efficient, “you need not spend many nights in the office.”

Travel also “varies considerably by position,” and promotions for junior-level employees are typically “one to two-and-a-half years apart,” but the time line “varies by level.”

Compensating for comp

Many consider CEB compensation a “weak spot.” According to one source, “Though not noncompetitive, salary is not yet at a McKinsey or BCG level, even though that is the caliber of talent they wish to attract.” Consultants are offered some perks to make up for lackluster salaries. The firm provides a 401(k) with some company match, in addition to “good health care” and “flexible savings accounts.” There’s also paternity leave for those who need it, and all employees get 19 days of vacation in their first year (24 in the second). Other benefits include gym membership discounts, backup day care and an employee discount center. Consultants also enjoy a “mix of official and unofficial training.”

Community service is encouraged and rewarded, and the firm is “highly regarded in the Washington area for its service efforts.” Employees can earn extra days of paid time off by participating in service activities throughout the year.

Mixed reviews on diversity

There’s “lots of diversity” at CEB and “a large international contingent,” but reviews are mixed when it comes to gender balance. It can sometimes feel like a “boys’ club,” with “lots of very young, impressionable women in the entry-level ranks.” Some notice “lots of politically incorrect behavior, deemed by management to be in ‘good fun.’” The firm challenges this assertion, stating that equal opportunity employment is a strategic priority, and that women comprise much of the senior-level management ranks.

Cornerstone Research

353 Sacramento Street, 23rd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
Phone: (415) 229-8100
Fax: (415) 229-8199

599 Lexington Avenue, 43rd Floor
New York, NY 10022
Phone: (212) 605-5000
Fax: (212) 759-3045
www.cornerstone.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA
Los Angeles, CA
Menlo Park, CA
New York, NY
San Francisco, CA
Washington, DC

PRACTICE AREAS

Accounting
Antitrust
Energy
Financial Institutions
Intellectual Property
Securities

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: James K. Malernee Jr.
CEO & President: Cynthia L. Zollinger
2008 Employees: 450 +
2007 Employees: 400 +



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Small, economics-focused training ground"
- "Boring work, combing through documents"
- "Supportive firm, great culture"
- "Limited"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#7 – Economic Consulting

Quality of Life

#1 – Travel Requirements
#5 – Formal Training
#6 – Best Firms to Work For
#7 – Firm Culture
#8 – Compensation
#10 (Tie) – Relationships with Supervisors
#15 – Overall Satisfaction
#17 – Offices
#18 – Hours in the Office

Diversity

#4 – Best Firms for Diversity
#5 – Diversity for Women
#6 – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- Elite clientele
- "High caliber of peers"
- "Perfect niche between the worlds of business, academia and law"
- "'We're all in this together' attitude"

DOWNERS

- Strict perfectionism
- "When you start, there can be a bit of drudgery"
- "Hectic deadlines"
- "Growth is challenging the firm culture"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.cornerstone.com/opportunities.html

THE SCOOP

Law of numbers

Commercial litigation increasingly involves complex economic and financial issues, thus attorneys rely on Cornerstone Research to provide them with the data, experts and analyses they need. Cornerstone specializes in applying cutting-edge economic and finance techniques to real-world problems. The firm is especially known for developing analyses in cases involving securities, antitrust, intellectual property, accounting, energy, health care and financial institutions.

Cornerstone has worked with an enormous string of top attorneys and law firms over the years. For legal reasons, the firm is secretive about its clients, but recent victories in which Cornerstone has supported experts include the CSFB analyst securities litigation, the Warner Chilcott Ovcon antitrust litigation, the Omnicom Group securities litigation and the Leegin antitrust case decided by the Supreme Court in November 2007. Many of Cornerstone's cases are make or break for their clients, with the most recent public example being the successful JDS Uniphase trial in which plaintiffs sought damages of approximately \$20 billion due to claimed violations of various SEC regulations. The firm's clients represent a diverse cross section of industries, including financial markets, pharmaceutical and biotech, telecommunications, high tech, manufacturing and real estate.

Full-court press

In each of its projects, Cornerstone begins by conferring with attorneys to determine the key economic issues of a case and the types of experts and analyses that will be needed. It also helps estimate potential damages and makes preliminary assessments, which can often be used to negotiate favorable settlements. Then the firm helps find effective experts, often from its wide network of outside sources, but also sometimes from its internal staff. Cornerstone helps organize and streamline research and the expert testimony process. Its consultants also have a great deal of trial experience, so they can help attorneys with any area of in-court proceedings, in addition to aiding with the preparation of witnesses.

To conduct its research, the firm draws on both academic faculty and experts in the trenches. Its network of academics comes from many of the nation's top business schools, economics departments and law schools, while the pool of experts it calls upon includes professionals who specialize in finance, economics, accounting and marketing research. Consultants come from an even broader range of fields, including mathematics and computer science.

Breaking away

Cornerstone was founded in 1989 by Cynthia L. Zollinger and James K. Malernee Jr. The two had been working at the MAC Group, a management consulting firm (which was later acquired by Gemini Consulting), and had established a group focused on economic consulting. In 1986, they concluded that the fundamental differences between financial and economic consulting and management consulting called for a more dedicated focus, so they set up a separate profit center within the MAC Group. Finally, in May 1989, the pair split away completely to form Cornerstone.

In the news

Because Cornerstone maintains a low profile for its clients, the national media is mainly aware of the firm through its Securities Class Action Clearinghouse. In coordination with Stanford Law School, the clearinghouse provides detailed information on federal class-action litigation for securities fraud. Clearinghouse research is mined by a variety of major media outlets, such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, but it comprises only a small part of Cornerstone's work. If a company has a problem that lends itself to economic or financial analysis, Cornerstone is often retained. Recent cases have revolved around the subprime mortgage crisis, auction rate securities, private equity deals that fell through due to the credit crisis and stock option backdating.

Stepping stone

The vast majority of undergraduates who join Cornerstone eventually leave to earn a graduate degree, with most pursuing an MBA. In 2008, as in past years, the firm's departing analysts will attend some of the top MBA programs in the country, including Stanford, Harvard and MIT. Other departing consultants choose to pursue PhDs in economics or finance, or law degrees, also at top schools such as Duke, Stanford, Harvard or Columbia. The firm takes several formal steps to help consultants with the application process. It brings in admissions counselors from Wharton, Stanford, Duke, MIT, Kellogg, Chicago and other top institutions to give presentations and talk to students about their respective schools and the requirements for admission. Cornerstone also maintains an alumni web site for former employees, which serves as a resource for current consultants looking to talk to someone who has attended or is currently enrolled in a top program.

GETTING HIRED

Hit the books

Breaking into Cornerstone is no light undertaking, as all analysts (the entry-level position) must complete three rounds of interviews, for a total of eight, "all consisting of case studies." The case studies will vary by interviewer, but may deal with securities, valuation, antitrust, intellectual property, energy and financial institutions, such as banks, insurers or hedge funds. As an example, an insider offers details of an antitrust case study, which "might involve designing and implementing a damages model due to exclusion of competition." Another source points out that "the best way to prepare is to review what you learned in class," since candidates will not be subjected to "logic puzzles or open-ended questions." "We will never ask how many pingpong balls can fill up an Olympic-sized pool or how many DVDs are sold in a year." In addition to helping the firm assess a candidate's problem-solving skills and academic knowledge, the cases are meant to expose candidates to real-world projects; most are tightly grounded in projects the interviewer has worked on, so they are a great introduction to actual casework.

The firm recruits from "top national universities," either setting up "resume drops and phone interviews," or conducting on-campus recruiting at select schools. A contact in New York lists "Yale, Princeton, Penn, Columbia and Williams" as slated for visits from his office, while a D.C. source identifies "Duke, UVA, William and Mary and Georgetown" as usual recruiting suspects, adding, "We also focus some effort on Johns Hopkins and UNC." Hot spots on the West Coast are Stanford, Berkeley, UCLA, USC and the Claremont-McKenna colleges.

Interns return

Cornerstone typically hires summer analysts and summer associates (usually MBA students) in each of its six offices, and these summer employees tend to return to as full-time consultants. Indeed, according to the company, a number of current staffers are alumni of its summer program. Fortunately, summer interns are not relegated to coffee making and gopher duties. One recent hire recalls, "The work I did wasn't all that interesting, but it was real work that contributed to the case and would otherwise have been done by a full-time analyst." Another former intern describes the experience as "the same as a full-time position. Summer interns are expected to perform the same analysis and participate in all team meetings." A co-worker adds, "I did end up working some long hours." Sources feel the experience is a rewarding one, however; as one points out, "I worked directly with a manager, and was able to learn SAS, a statistical program I didn't know, and use it for casework." Now an analyst, the respondent calls Cornerstone "an amazing and nurturing place for an internship."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

A thriving office culture

Insiders repeatedly give Cornerstone high marks for its culture, and deem it “a priority” of the firm. A source attributes the great environment to the “core values” of “dedication to our employees, dedication to our clients and experts, and dedication to quality.” A colleague explains, “It’s an extremely friendly and pleasant environment. We have a social committee that plans activities throughout the year on a scale ranging from cupcakes to celebrate a birthday to a happy hour to attending a sporting event.” Having fully involved co-workers makes a big difference for one vice president, who says, “People come through for each other and support each other both professionally and personally. And the firm invests a great deal in developing people, through training, case experiences and advising.” Company policy and continuity of leadership—both of the firm’s founders are still in leadership positions—may be contributing factors to such a unified culture. A consultant explains, “Your performance is evaluated based on a set of standards instead of against your peers. As a result, there is no incentive for backstabbing or sabotage.”

Interaction abounds

Nor do staffers have to deal with any shortage of time with management or superiors. An insider shares, “I feel completely comfortable walking into the CEO’s office and talking about anything, from the local NBA team to a case I’m working on.” A source in the Menlo Park office recalls, “Soon after I got here, I was taken under the wing of a guy who is maybe five years ahead of me, and he has provided me with opportunities and mentorship ever since, for which I am really grateful.”

Client exposure may be somewhat more limited, depending on rank. As one insider states, “Managers would always try to include analysts in client and expert meetings. However, this is highly dependent on the attorney and clients’ decisions.” A research associate explains, “In terms of interaction with clients and experts, you get more interaction as you become more senior and have more experience. When you’re brand new, I would say your interactions with clients and experts are minimal to none.”

Chance to smell the roses

Most respondents find the balance between work and personal life satisfactory. “Unless it’s absolutely necessary to meet a deadline,” says a source, “managers will not ask for late nights or weekend work, and instead will encourage people to go home.” A senior analyst breaks it down thusly: “The work is quite cyclical, so you will go through periods where you are working several weekends and late nights, and then periods where you have quite a bit of free time outside of work. These are generally fairly predictable.” Sometimes it requires a little help from friends, but as one source reveals, “People are very supportive of vacations, weekend plans, etc., and others will pick up the slack to help you meet personal commitments. However, in any client services business, there are periods where you are very busy.” And according to an insider in Los Angeles, the busy times sometimes reach critical mass. “There are weekends when you definitely have to come in and work. There are times that people have to cancel trips and vacations due to casework.”

Few road woes

But Cornerstone doesn’t demand much travel of its consultants. “Most of our work requires only minimal travel for all but the most senior,” says one source. “We rarely travel for work,” agrees an analyst, adding, “When we do, it is generally on a voluntary basis, except for our annual training, which is a fun bonding experience across offices.” However, those seeking a little more time off site can arrange it. A source points out, “I am a little unusual in that in the last six months I have traveled more to client meetings, but I sought this out and was happy that I was given this responsibility.”

The beauty of gainful employment

Staffers sound off with glee on the perks and fringe benefits of their work, such as “great free snacks and drinks, and a fitness club membership reimbursement to work it all off!” Another gustatory delight: “We have bagels every Wednesday.” A respondent mentions that there are “so many fun social events (ski trips, rafting, golf/softball, parties)! The whole firm also attends a firmwide off-site every three years (all our employees are flown in from all over the country).” Less glamorous but still important, an analyst describes how the “company reimburses any work-related training, books and classes, such as the CFA and CPA books, classes and tests.” Another notes, as well, that “the company pays for consulting services provided to research associates applying to MBA and graduate/PhD programs.”

Respondents are also pleased with their paychecks—an associate in San Francisco claims compensation “starts higher than the big management consulting companies.” A senior analyst agrees, describing the pay as “extremely competitive compared to other finance and economic consulting firms.” A colleague feels that “Cornerstone is very generous, and never tries to nickel-and-dime you,” while another declares, “Great work is rewarded with great compensation.”

A room of one's own

A source from out West happily reports, “Our offices are all relatively new and beautifully appointed. The San Francisco office has some amazing views!” But sometimes concessions must be made; one source admits, “I currently share a pretty good-sized office with a more junior person, and we have a huge window.” Other offices are less glamorous, but are showing signs of improvement. “The Menlo Park office is somewhat dated, though we are going through a major renovation right now and everything should be much nicer in a few months.” A senior analyst in D.C. is pleased with his accommodations, noting, “I have an office that overlooks Pennsylvania Avenue. This comes with lots of light and awesome views of sunsets. The kitchen is nice and open, with wood floors and plenty of seating.”

Watch and learn

Cornerstone trains new hires both formally and informally. “Each analyst at the firm is partnered with a mentor (a more experienced analyst) and an advisor (a manager) to help them,” a source explains. On top of this, “there are annual official training sessions, but because each case is unique, you also learn a lot through informal mentoring, especially since everyone is so helpful.” Even within the project allocation system, attention is given to talent development. Every week, all managers sit down together to discuss project needs, staff availability and staff interests to match employees with projects. As a vice president reveals, formal weekly staffing meetings provide “opportunities for people to be assigned to cases that will offer them the experiences they need to develop.” In addition, analysts have the opportunity to act in leadership roles and get involved in the firm beyond analytical casework in areas such as recruiting, training and research projects.

As they develop, Cornerstone staffers progress through a fairly transparent career path. A respondent explains, “After two years, most analysts are promoted to senior analyst; after three years, most are promoted to research associate. Being promoted to associate from research associate is less common, but can happen after five or more years.” Almost all associates, however, are hired directly from top MBA and PhD programs, such as Stanford, Harvard, Chicago and MIT. Though a source states that “promotion to the associate level is very difficult without a graduate degree,” Cornerstone has several higher-level employees who started as analysts and then chose to rejoin the company after getting their MBA or PhD. An associate in Washington, D.C., says of climbing the ladder, “Promotions are relatively routine in the first three to five years with the firm, and then depend more on a demonstrated ability to perform at the higher level.”

Standing united

Cornerstone has an enlightened, inclusive approach when it comes to diversity. A consultant comments, “We have staff at all levels who are openly gay. Domestic partners are simply family. We are all part of one big team.” Another agrees: “The firm is very open and respectful with regard to people’s personal choices. GLBT staff members are generally very open about their sexual orientation.” Ethnicity is also not a barrier, although diversity in this case isn’t necessarily the norm. “Cornerstone has a

lot of Asian, Indian and white people, along with a large number of international employees,” says a source. “However, we do not have many Latino or black consultants.”

With two of the three original managing directors being women, Cornerstone is in a good place with regard to gender diversity. After all, a research associate points out, “our CEO and many high-level managers are women.” By one female VP’s count, “Almost half the [officers] are women. It’s really an exceptionally supportive environment for young women—there are many senior women mentors.” The staff composition isn’t engineered, though. “We don’t make a conscious effort to hire more women, but we naturally end up with a pretty even split,” an insider points out.

Think of the community

Cornerstone is socially conscious, sponsoring “an outreach program that plans monthly events and fund-raising activities,” according to one source. Activities “include clothing drives, tutoring and soup kitchen volunteering.” A research associate notes that the firm has “annual donation drives for local charities, like food and clothing drives, blood drives, Toys for Tots, etc.” Outside of giving initiatives, a colleague adds, “we also have a green committee that works to educate the firm and make our work habits more environmentally friendly.”

Mitchell Madison Group LLC

17 State Street, 22nd Floor
New York, NY 10004
Phone: (646) 873-4100
Fax: (212) 742-9719
www.mitchellmadison.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)
Los Angeles, CA
Manila

PRACTICE AREAS

Best Practices Benchmarking
Capital Efficiency
Credit, Market & Operational Risk
Pricing Optimization
Process Reengineering
Sales & Revenue Growth
Strategy & Cost Optimization
Technology Management

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
CEO: Rolf Thrane
2008 Employees: 105
2007 Employees: 140

UPPERS

- "Rocking the boat when it comes to the consulting industry"
- Competitive compensation
- "The opportunity to move up and shine"
- "Not bureaucratic"

DOWNERS

- "Small, entrepreneurial environment does not satisfy everyone with a corporate America background"
- "Limited opportunity to move within geographies"
- "Stressful environment (sometimes unnecessarily)"
- Little formal training

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.mitchellmadison.com/careers.html

E-mail: careers@mitchellmadison.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Bright people"
- "Sourcing—narrow"
- "Good at financial services"
- "A shadow of its former self"

THE SCOOP

The flexible consulting firm

Flexibility—this is a key word for Mitchell Madison Group. Unlike larger firms that offer up front fee-for-service plans, MMG touts that its payment options cover the full range between 100 percent fee and 100 percent contingency. The firm claims to mold itself to the shape of its clients, rather than the other way around. It also tries to distinguish itself by linking fees to the results its consultants deliver, not the analyses they perform. Although the firm will provide advice to almost any type of client, some of the industries it gives particular attention to are banking, capital markets, payment systems, insurance, manufacturing, telecommunications and resource extraction.

At first glance, it may seem odd that a firm of this size would market itself as a large player. Whereas most small and mid-sized firms try to stand out from the crowd by offering unique specializations, MMG swings for the fences, offering expertise in not only strategy and cost optimization, but in credit, market and operational risk, process re-engineering, pricing optimization, capital efficiency, technology management, best practices benchmarking, and sales and revenue growth.

Shooting star

The firm traces its roots back to 1991, when a group of consultants from McKinsey was hired away by A.T. Kearney to form a strategy practice. The group was led by veteran consultant Tom Steiner, and it quickly became successful. By 1994, the group had decided that A.T. Kearney was hampering its growth potential, and the management bought its freedom. The new firm took its name from the Mitchell Street bar where Steiner came up with the idea for independence, and Madison Avenue, home to the group's original headquarters.

In just five years, MMG's revenue showed marked growth. Analysts estimated the firm to be worth over \$500 million, and it employed over 900 professionals around the world. Unfortunately, this growth came too quickly and the firm had to clamor for cash. Internal bickering among management led to the departure of five founding partners and directors, 10 percent of the staff was laid off and the firm started rescinding job offers. Finally, Internet marketing company USWeb/CKS acquired the company in 1999, and merged in 2000 with Chicago consultancy Whittman Hart. The deal combined all three firms into the unwieldy marchFIRST consulting firm, which set out with the ambition to become top dog in the then-booming world of technology consulting. From our current safe distance years after the dot-com bubble burst, the next part of the story isn't shocking. By April 2001, marchFIRST's stock price had free-fallen to \$0.31, and the firm filed for bankruptcy.

A new beginning

In 2003, current CEO Rolf Thrane and other company founders bought the rights to the MMG name and began the new Mitchell Madison Group from a fresh perspective. The strategy of the revitalized firm focused on its belief in the continuing rapid growth of three basic economic forces: the re-emergence of an integrated global capital market, the integration of over three billion consumers and producers in a single generation, and the revolution in information logistics. This MMG is a different MMG than what was seen in the 1990s, but the firm retains its global influence, with clients located in North America, South America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

Among the signals of resurgence was Thrane being named one of *Consulting* magazine's top-25 consultants for 2007. In his profile in the publication, Thrane defined the difference in MMG's approach to carrying out assignments—something that he claims lies in its willingness to go beyond the diagnostic stage of traditional consulting models. “We don't work that way,” he said. “We do the diagnostic work, we present the options, we come up with the implementation plan, and then we get very involved in the work where it hits the bottom line.”

GETTING HIRED

Counting stoplights

Qualified candidates at MMG will typically have “two to three interviews.” The types of questions that will be asked may depend on the interviewer’s staff level—we’re told that “analysts/associates may ask generic estimation/quantitative cases,” while “managers/partners will ask situational cases based on client engagements.” The “typical case study questions” may include something along the lines of “How many hairdressers are there in Texas?” or “How many stoplights are there in Manhattan?”

The firm recruits “at a handful of schools on the East and West Coasts,” including Brown, Yale, Wesleyan, Caltech, MIT, UPenn and Princeton.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

“Results are everything”

It’s “sink or swim” at MMG, where, in the “aggressive and entrepreneurial” environment, “everyone is very driven” and “results are everything.” “As a small firm,” describes a business analyst, “we are rewarded for excelling, but not nurtured if struggling.” A senior manager adds, “Everyone knows to expect the question, ‘What’s the number?’ (i.e., the dollar amount of profit and loss impact you’re responsible for).” Or as another staffer puts it, “Our projects are usually paid on contingency—a percentage of our savings. This creates a strong emphasis on analytical skills and results-driven work.” Still, some respondents do describe the culture as “collaborative and very collegial,” at least “among the analysts and associates.”

Fly up the ladder

All this emphasis on results means that “if you are good, the sky is the limit.” A manager explains, “People have moved from analyst to manager and from manager to partner in very few years,” and an associate adds that “one consultant made senior manager from analyst in two years and more than tripled his salary.” Others agree that the firm allows for “rapid promotion all the way to partner level.”

As for relationships with those partners, a newbie remarks, “The small size means I know all of the partners and have the opportunity to be noticed as soon as I prove myself.” Others agree that the “smaller-firm feel” and “entrepreneurial environment” mean “more access to managers/partners and direct feedback.” Plus, junior staff don’t get stuck with too many administrative duties, since “we have a back office in Manila that does research, graphics and data processing,” a business analyst notes. He adds happily, “This takes some of the mundane work out of being an analyst and provides remote management experience.”

Ask away

On the subject of training, a senior manager insists that “adequate time is set aside,” at least “for junior ranks.” However, a business analyst notes, “We do have official mentors, but the extent of interaction with your mentor generally depends on your own initiative.” As a result, “most training is unofficial,” and comes about through “asking other analysts or associates” for help.

With this in mind, it’s wise to ask a lot of questions, since the firm has a “grow-or-go environment—people are let go if they don’t perform.” As a senior manager puts it, “Personnel evaluations are done frequently and fairly. If you don’t improve your skills, you should not be a consultant.” And a colleague reports, “We hired eight analysts last year and three were fired this year.” Better start training!

Move up on merit

When it comes to hiring and promoting women and minorities, staffers say MMG's policies are completely "merit-based." We're told that the firm "has two out of nine female partners," and "about half the managers are women." An analyst comments, "While women are still a minority in the firm, they are certainly welcome and present at all levels, from analyst to partner." In addition, says a senior manager, "The firm hires a lot of non-U.S. citizens, and there is therefore a great representation of cultures." Others agree, "We have a very diverse firm," with staffers hailing "from Asia to Latin America to Africa." And in this "very open culture," there is a gay partner and "many others throughout the ranks." As one insider puts it, sexual orientation is "not a big deal—as it shouldn't be."

Travel breaks up the daily grind

Those who do stick around will "travel a lot," but an associate claims, "It's not that bad." Others agree, stating, "The travel actually makes the work easier," and "I wouldn't trade it for a 9-to-5 with the same people always around me." A senior manager explains, "MMG is a small firm and tends to send people wherever there is demand." He averages three days on the road per week, although he also reports having taken "several 'round-the-world-in-eight-days' types of trips. Others say they travel "about every other week," noting that they're "at the client site when it makes sense." Respondents generally agree that "travel is heavy when projects are in the busy phases," but "not required during other times."

Wavy work

Having no regular travel schedule, though, can make planning difficult. A business analyst comments, "Uncertain travel certainly inhibits my ability to plan regular weekday events in New York." However, a colleague adds, "it doesn't affect my weekend time." "During travel assignments, the schedule is typically Monday through Thursday, allowing for good family balance on Fridays and weekends," explains a senior manager.

Like travel demands, we're told the general "workload comes in waves," so "there are occasional parts of the year when deadlines require a heavier commitment to work." "Sometimes it's very relaxed, but sometimes I think sleep is a luxury," states a New York-based staffer. The average reported workweek varies from 50 to 75 hours. A junior associate comments, "When a project is most demanding, work can expand to 70 to 80 hours a week, especially when at the client site. The downtime on or between projects makes this work tolerable."

Still, most staffers say they are "able to have work/life balance" and that, of late, "partners are working hard to ensure" that trend continues. A senior manager comments, "The firm is more results-driven than other places I've worked, so as long as you book the result, it's fine—whether you're in NYC or in the Bahamas." Still, a recent hire warns, "work/life balance at the analyst level depends almost entirely on your manager's value of his/her personal time. There is a mix of managers who strive for a life outside of work and those who do not."

Gaze at the Statue of Liberty

Across the board, insiders say compensation levels at MMG keep them satisfied. Bonuses, while "not guaranteed, are historically 50 or 100 percent" of salary. We're also told that "profit sharing is, to some extent, reflected in the bonus." In other perks, there's a "generous PTO policy," and "wedding and baby presents are sent to consultants after major life events." One respondent is disappointed that, "working on contingency for cost cutting, we are probably more frugal than most firms in our expense policy."

What does have insiders cheering is that "there are no cubicles" in the offices, which, for consultants in New York, means "everyone has a beautiful view of the water and the Statue of Liberty." But wake up! As one senior manager comments, "There's little time for daydreaming." Good thing there's also "free pizza and beer in the office on Fridays," which helps staffers unwind.

Some sources add that the firm is good about sharing the wealth with the community at large, and encourages tutoring, mentoring and other "community volunteering activities." We're told that MMG supports the New York City-based Children for Children and provides pro bono work to bolster the organization's annual fund-raising efforts.

2000 Powell Street, Suite 600
Emeryville, CA 94608
Phone: (510) 985-6700
www.lecg.com

LOCATIONS

Emeryville, CA (HQ)
29 offices in 10 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Antitrust & Competition Policy
Bankruptcy & Restructuring
Electronic Discovery
Energy
Entertainment, Media & Sports
Environment & Natural Resources
Finance, Valuation & Damages
Financial Services
Forensic Accounting
Healthcare & Life Sciences
Insurance Claims
Intellectual Property
International Arbitration
Labor & Employment
Securities
Telecommunication
Transportation

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company
Ticker Symbol: XPRT (Nasdaq)
Chairman: Garrett F. Bouton
2008 Employees: 1,104
2007 Employees: 1,000 +
2007 Revenue: \$370.4 million
2006 Revenue: \$353.9 million



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Focused, intelligent"
- "Floundering"
- "Underrated"
- "Eat what you kill"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#6 – Economic Consulting

UPPER

- Diverse environment

DOWNER

- Lots of recent turnover

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.lecg.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Gray matter when it matters most

LECG is a global expert services firm, providing independent expert testimony and analysis, original authoritative studies and strategic consulting services to clients in a variety of fields. The objective opinions and advice of the company's experts can be used to inform legislative, judicial and business decision makers, or can be applied to resolve complex disputes. These individuals may be academics, former government officials, industry leaders or merely seasoned consultants.

The firing of the first synapse

The company was formed in March 1988 by a group of faculty members at the University of California, Berkeley, who sought to lend their expertise toward the resolution of commercial disputes. Fifteen years later, in 2003, LECG launched an IPO on Nasdaq, and now includes in its scope Global Fortune 500 clients in more than 30 countries. Its talent pool comprises over 800 professionals and experts.

According to a March 2007 piece in *The Wall Street Journal*, a "free-market view of the law," which began to take hold in the 1980s, spurred an increase in the perceived value of expert testimony. "Courts now rely far more on economic analysis, with its apparent precision, to reach decisions." LECG has been able to take full advantage of this trend.

Voltron, assemble!

When contracted by a client for a project, LECG shapes a team of directors and principals (i.e., credentialed authorities on the subject at hand), senior staff (specialists working their way up to the principal role) and researchers. The researchers work behind the scenes, collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative information. Qualitative sources of information include trade press, academic material and market intelligence. Quantitative information includes economic, statistical and financial data from public sources, client records or confidential accounts gathered from other parties during litigation.

LECG staffers' credentials and certifications include, but are not limited to, PhDs, MBAs, MDs, master's in health services administration and JDs; plus a longer list of more obscure accreditations, which includes business valuation specialists, certified business analysts, certified business managers, certified financial analysts, certified forensic computer examiners, certified insolvency and restructuring advisors, and EnCase certified examiners.

In many cases, LECG's senior staff and experts continue to hold positions outside of the firm in their respective fields, working for research labs, corporations, universities, government agencies or other institutions. Thus: professionals, not professional witnesses.

One smart kiwi

New Zealander David J. Teece, one of the company's founders, has been described by the government of his home country as an "economic rock star," and was named one of the Top 50 Business Intellectuals in 2002 by Accenture. The highly decorated Teece is the Mitsubishi Bank professor of international business and finance at Berkeley's Haas School of Business, and director of the Institute of Management, Innovation and Organization. Teece also is a former director of the Atlas Family of Mutual Funds, and can claim authorship of over 200 books and articles.

Teece has also put his mark on corporate strategy through his studies evaluating who ultimately profits from an innovation. In those studies, the results of which now make up what is known as the Teece Model, Teece found two factors that determine where profit will land: imitability, or how easily competitors can copy or duplicate the technology or process that underlies an innovation, and complementary assets, for example, a better-known brand name or distribution channels. If one company comes up with a new product, but a competitor comes along, duplicates the product and slaps a more recognizable brand name on it, the competitor will walk away with the real benefits of the innovation.

In order to focus on talent development with fewer executive duties, Teece stepped down as chairman of the company in July 2007, though he remains on the board as nonexecutive vice chairman. He was replaced by Garrett F. Bouton, a board member and former CEO of Barclays Global Investors. Teece continues to find his name in the news, though—in early 2008, *Forbes* reported that he may owe the IRS up to \$12 million in back taxes and penalties because of capital gains losses claimed a decade earlier.

Following due diligence, no doubt

In March 2007, the company acquired the Secura Group LLC, a privately held consulting firm specializing in financial services and regulatory compliance. Secura's business profile, not surprisingly, is similar to LECG's. Its consultants advise major financial services companies and institutions on regulatory, legislative, technology and operational issues. Secura also frequently provides expert litigation services. LECG CEO Michael Jeffery indicated that the acquisition, which will bolster the existing financial services practice, was part of a continuing "emphasis on individual practice area growth" within the company.

GETTING HIRED

Nine-step program

There seems to be plenty of room for growth at LECG, as there are nine positions on its consulting career track. LECG explains on its careers web site that its project teams are composed of three levels of junior staff (research analyst, associate and senior associate), four levels of senior staff (consultant, senior consultant, managing consultant and senior managing consulting), and two levels of executives (directors and principals). Entry-level junior staffers typically come to LECG with "undergraduate degrees in our areas of focus," and "may also have work experience in areas related to our work." Senior-level candidates generally have "advanced degrees, including PhDs in economics or finance, MBAs or other professional degrees," and the firm stresses that "experience in creating economic or financial analyses for use in litigation, regulatory proceedings or business consulting projects is essential for LECG's more senior positions." Executives tend to be "nationally and internationally renowned professionals."

LECG notes, "In all roles at the firm, we seek to hire people who will expand the company's perspective on the world." To that end, fostering a "diverse workforce" and an "inclusive workplace" is a priority. In addition, the firm seeks diversity with respect to its practice areas, and "each practice area links us to a variety of industries."

Getting in

Interested parties can browse job openings online, or search for jobs by keyword, title and location. Listings include detailed information on position, duties and requirements. Applicants are encouraged to submit a resume on the Web or to contact a recruiting coordinator at an LECG office. The firm also devotes a page of its site to recruiting events.

LECG also has a summer associate program for which, it explains, it recruits "annually at a select number colleges and universities in the U.S. and the U.K." Interested candidates can also apply online or by contacting an LECG office.

No right answers

LECG's web site offers some insight into its interviewing process, which typically (especially at the junior level) consists of both "behavioral interviewing and case studies." On the behavioral side, candidates are presented with scenarios and asked how they would react in specific situations. Case studies are sometimes conducted individually and sometimes as a group, but there's "no one perfect answer" to any case. Instead, advises the firm, "how you go about exploring a case often is more meaningful than your specific conclusions." A sample case study is included on the firm's web site, though no sample answers are provided.

Alvarez & Marsal

600 Lexington Avenue, 6th Floor
 New York, NY 10022
 Phone: (212) 759-4433
 Fax: (212) 759-5532
www.alvarezandmarsal.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (Global HQ)
 36 offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Consulting
 Dispute Analysis & Forensics
 Financial Industry Advisory
 Healthcare
 Performance Improvement
 Public Sector
 Real Estate Advisory
 Tax Advisory
 Technology Asset Management
 Transaction Advisory
 Turnaround & Restructuring

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Co-CEOs: Tony Alvarez II & Bryan P. Marsal
2008 Employees: 1,200
2007 Employees: 1,100

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #5 – Hours in the Office
- #9 – Compensation
- #9 – Work/Life Balance
- #10 – Interaction with Clients
- #15 – Best Firms to Work For

UPPERS

- “Bureaucracy kept to a minimum”
- Sense of ownership
- “Small-firm feel, but competitive with the big firms”
- Performance-based compensation

DOWNERS

- “The infrastructure is not quite there”
- Still lacking some name recognition
- “Siloed practices that, to some extent, compete with each other”
- “Clubby, ex-Andersen people”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.alvarezandmarsal.com/en/careers/index.html



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “High-end, very experienced”
- “Cutthroat”
- “Nice people; up-and-coming”
- “Too focused on billable hours”

THE SCOOP

Treatment options

Alvarez & Marsal, an independent global professional services firm, boasts clients across a range of industries, including retail, health care, telecommunications, transportation, technology, manufacturing, financial services, the public sector, government, oil and gas, and energy and utilities. The firm's professionals, or "corporate doctors" as they are sometimes described, focus on preserving and maximizing the value of an enterprise. A&M is best known for its corporate turnaround and restructuring services, which consist of performance improvement, turnaround advisory, interim and crisis management, revenue enhancement, creditor advisory, corporate finance, claims management and risk management advisory. The firm also lends its expertise to companies in good health, advising on performance and process improvement related to functions such as human resources, strategy, IT, supply chain and customer management. A&M employs more than 1,200 consultants, and maintains offices in North and South America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Teeing off A&M

The company was founded in 1983, following a discussion during a golf game between Tony Alvarez II and Bryan Marsal. The pair, both with backgrounds in financial services, believed most consultants become so entangled in details that effective decision making can be neglected. Alvarez and Marsal, therefore, set out to create an organization that could offer tactical, action-oriented assistance to improve operational performance, instead of just strategic propositions. The firm's earliest engagements focused on debtor management and advising struggling corporations, experiences that formed the skill set utilized today in its turnaround practice. A&M's consulting divisions came into their own in 2003, when the company began recruiting seasoned professionals from other major firms, among them BearingPoint, Answerthink and Accenture.

Fixing the broken

A&M's turnaround and restructuring practice assists clients at multiple points on the downward arc of business failure—healthy with weak divisions (not yet descending, but beginning to tip), underperforming (slipping and falling) and in crisis (almost at rock bottom). The firm uses a five-step approach that first arrests the corporation's fall, then reverses it. Step one is stabilization. The goal is to alter the environment to promote positive change, ensuring there are sufficient cash resources and a well-prepared management team (either by supporting or equipping them with objective, fact-based information or by placing A&M professionals on the roster as interim executives, when required). Step two is diagnosis. The firm investigates and analyzes the state of the industry, identifying obstacles and opportunities. Step three is self-explanatory: planning. A&M takes account of the client's strengths and maps a course of action. Facilitation is step four. Instituting the plan calls for the cooperation and commitment of the organization, as a whole. This sequences into the final step—leadership. Execution of real change is only possible with capable leadership, coming from the existing management team or through A&M's professionals serving in interim management roles.

Minds on mortgages

In December 2007, the firm formed a dedicated team—leveraging the expertise of its turnaround and restructuring, real estate advisory, transaction advisory and dispute analysis and forensic services professionals—to assist clients in the home building industry. The subprime mortgage crisis, which began to rear its ugly head in 2006, has left the industry in a devastating lurch. More than 100 subprime mortgage lenders have closed or filed for bankruptcy. A&M is being sought both by distressed companies with pressure from creditors and by relatively secure companies hoping to insulate themselves against further shockwaves from the collapse. Its clients include public and private builders—or their creditors—in California, Nevada, Florida and elsewhere.

In February 2008, Kimball Hill Homes contracted with A&M, taking on Andrew Hede as chief restructuring officer. Kimball Hill, one of the 25-largest U.S. home builders, is based in Illinois and conducts operations in 11 major markets, among them Chicago, Houston, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Las Vegas, Tampa and Sacramento. Hede is a managing director at A&M, and a co-head of the new home building industry group, along with San Francisco-based Managing Director Scott Brubaker. In Hede's capacity as CRO, he will direct financial and operational restructurings, design an updated business plan and prepare possible recapitalization strategies.

Tackling the credit crunch

In June 2008, A&M launched its financial industry advisory services group to assist the countless troubled financial organizations that are embroiled in managing the effects of the credit crunch. The firm tapped Samuel P. Golden, a former senior official with the U.S. Office of the Comptroller of the Currency to head up the group. The experienced team, composed of former bankers and bank regulators, turnaround managers, real estate advisers, forensic accountants, IT strategists and others, offers a battle-tested approach to managing and mitigating risk, and driving value creation for financial institutions in all market cycles.

Damage control

Another of A&M's business units experiencing strong demand due to current business and economic trends is dispute analysis and forensic services. Founded in response to the bursting of the telecom bubble, the group deploys accountants, certified fraud examiners, economists, and intellectual property and licensing specialists to address financial or electronic data issues, often handling cases involving litigation, arbitration, regulation by the SEC and similar matters that surround companies mired in real or suspected fraud. Services include litigation and arbitration, financial investigations and restatements, and forensic technology.

Rally attempts

The creation of the home building turnaround group and the surging business of the dispute analysis group are just signs of the times; A&M's restructuring work, whatever the industry, has been and will continue to flourish. The company founders themselves were involved in two recent high-profile cases, namely, Interstate Bakeries, where Alvarez stood in as interim CEO, and HealthSouth Corp., where Marsal was appointed CRO.

Interstate, the food products distributor responsible for gustatory favorites Wonder Bread, Twinkies and Devil Dogs, filed for bankruptcy in September 2004, citing over \$1 billion in liabilities. Alvarez steered the company through several years of debtor-in-possession status, securing financing and extensions on orders of the bankruptcy court when necessary. In February 2007, although the company had still not achieved profitability, he passed the reins to Craig D. Jung, who had been selected from outside Interstate.

HealthSouth, a health care services provider with a network of more than 200 hospitals and rehabilitation centers, was embroiled in controversy in March 2003, following CEO Richard M. Scrushy's indictments for accounting fraud. As CRO, Marsal was faced with \$2.6 billion in debt, but managed to avoid a bankruptcy filing through canny arrangement of financing. By October 2006, the company was relisted on the NYSE and ready to move on from the bad apple era of Scrushy (who was eventually acquitted of the fraud charges, but found guilty of bribery in a separate incident).

A&M doesn't solely appoint its namesakes to the management of struggling companies. In April 2006, Movie Gallery Inc., which had incurred over \$1 billion in debt from the acquisition of a rival, hired the firm and brought on Managing Director Bill Kosturos as CRO. Although Kosturos guided the company in refinancing a credit line, the massive DVD and video renter may have fatally overreached. In fall 2007, it missed payments to creditors and filed for bankruptcy. Its number of store closures is expected to hit 1,000 by the end of 2008.

A more clear-cut success story for A&M was its engagement with AMERCO, the parent of truck and trailer renter U-Haul. A&M piloted AMERCO out of bankruptcy with no ultimate loss of shareholder value, an almost unheard of occurrence. Over the

course of the engagement, the company directed the restructuring of over \$1.2 billion in debt obligations, while also rooting out hidden value in the balance sheets.

Growth spurt

New groups and strong results tend to translate into company growth. This has been readily apparent for A&M over the past two years, as it opened new offices and expanded the capabilities of existing offices. A&M touched down in Dubai and New Delhi in 2007, extending its reach in services such as operational performance improvement, turnaround management, and restructuring and transaction advisory. A new location in Shanghai was opened in September 2007, the first in mainland China. In November 2006, the firm opened an office in Toronto, appointing as its leader Douglas R. McIntosh, a former head of KPMG's Canadian restructuring unit.

Changing the business of health care

In 2008, Alvarez & Marsal's health care industry group highlighted its ability to assist health care organizations through completion of the successful restructuring of Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers. Guy Sansone, who served as interim CEO of St. Vincent's during its Chapter 11 bankruptcy and restructuring, was given St. Vincent's Angelus Award, its most esteemed honor, for his efforts to save the hospital system. A&M also announced in October 2007 that it had joined forces with the ImPART Group, a strategic health care consultancy, to further enhance its ability to serve organizations across the health care continuum. A&M health care professionals and the ImPART Group bring experience serving in advisory and interim management roles with health care organizations, including HealthSouth, University of Southern California, Keck School of Medicine, Watts Health Foundation, Inc., Florida Hospital Memorial System and University Hospital, among others.

In April 2008, A&M continued on its quest to change the business of health care, issuing an eye-opening hospital insolvency study. The firm's analysis of more than 4,500 short-term acute care hospitals in the U.S., which was picked up by *The Wall Street Journal*, found that more than half are technically insolvent or teetering on the brink of insolvency. Looking at criteria such as operating expenses and net revenue, the study focused on two key measures of hospital performance—patient care margin and EBITDA margin. The message to hospital management and boards was clear: Act now to ensure long-term solvency.

A stir over schools

A&M is active in the public sector as well, primarily through projects for school districts. School reform, however, is a politically charged undertaking, and A&M's efforts have at times had contentious results. The city of St. Louis hired the company in 2004 to assist with the operational and financial problems of its school system, a move that put Managing Director William Roberti in a uniquely public role (for a business consultant) as acting superintendent. He oversaw sweeping organizational changes and cost cutting in an attempt to funnel resources back to the classroom.

But in March 2007, with the schools facing depressed enrollment and in danger of losing accreditations, and with the district out \$5 million in consulting fees, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* columnist Bill McLellan wrote, "Let's sue." McLellan, calling Roberti and his team "charlatans," saw the turnaround as poorly executed and ultimately detrimental. Echoing these sentiments, Marilyn Ayres-Salamon, an area teacher, wrote an account of her experiences during the project called *A Recipe for Failure: A Year of Reform and Chaos in the St. Louis Public Schools*. In her book, she accuses A&M of making decisions without considering the needs of students and the community, in time "decimating" the support systems "necessary for teachers to teach and students to learn." The school board, too, wasn't satisfied, and abandoned the company's five-year plan in July 2007.

A&M insists that its client, the school district, holds a more favorable view. In fact, former St. Louis Mayor and School Board Member Vincent Schoemehl wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Sun* in which he stated, "A&M was brought in to salvage an untenable situation. They discovered a \$75-million deficit at year-end and a short-term cash shortfall of \$99 million—out of a total budget of \$450 million. A&M righted the financial house and enabled the St. Louis Public Schools to survive." Schoemehl cited the project's success in getting the district's finances in order, implementing wide-ranging reforms in curriculum and redirected spending from administration to classrooms. Current Mayor Francis Slay was similarly supportive in a story for

the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*: “When it comes to education in St. Louis, no one has ever accomplished as much in as little time as Bill Roberti.”

Another major metropolitan school district, this time New York, hired the company in June 2006 with the stated goal of moving \$200 million from the bureaucracy to the schools. Its report to the city’s Department of Education in November 2007 claimed a better-than-hoped-for \$290 million in redirected funds, although this project, too, stirred up controversy during its run. In February 2007, A&M was blamed for a failed rerouting of buses, which left many students with no transportation because they had been left off of master lists of riders. New York City Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum called for the termination of A&M’s contract (worth \$16 million), but the mayor’s office, which has publicly stated its satisfaction with the firm’s work, chose to continue on.

Better results in the Big Easy

The company’s work for schools isn’t always destined for mixed reviews. It was hired by New Orleans in July 2005 to bring order to the finances and operations of the city school system. No easy task to begin with, the situation worsened exponentially only a month later when Hurricane Katrina came to town. The turnaround became a disaster recovery, bringing A&M’s real estate advisory services and dispute analysis teams into the picture. The firm made progress, though, and at the start of 2006, over 10,000 students were able to return to 20 functioning school buildings. Then, as a result of a February 2007 ruling, the city’s director of recovery granted schools the use of commercial buildings as temporary facilities, creating much-needed classroom space. The conclusion of A&M’s contract with the Orleans Parish School Board saw the school system receiving its first clean audit report in years.

GETTING HIRED

Got a contact?

Sources say a majority of new hires “are no more than one or two degrees removed from someone else in the firm.” That’s an attempt “to preserve quality and culture by ensuring someone can vouch for you before letting you in the door.” A manager explains, “It’s not easy getting hired here because they value relationships and don’t take risks.” Experienced candidates, who “normally come from referrals” within the firm, will find the hiring process fairly simple for this very reason; says one, “I had only one interview, but I had a prior work relationship with my direct boss.”

In addition, “a significant weight is placed on work experience, and individuals without significant work experience are at a disadvantage.” But besides tapping into its “network of professionals,” A&M also turns to “campus recruiting for new consultants.”

Take it regional

Undergraduate and graduate recruiting “is regional,” we’re told, with different offices looking to different schools, among them Georgia Tech and Emory for the Atlanta office; Berkeley, University of Southern California-Marshall, University of Washington, Stanford and UCLA on the West Coast; University of North Carolina-Charlotte, UNC-Chapel Hill, Appalachian State University and the University of Florida in the Southeast; Texas A&M, University of Texas and Rice in the South; and University of Chicago and Northwestern in Midwest. UPenn and Harvard are also targets.

“Campus recruiting includes an initial behavioral and mini-case interview, followed by a daylong case interview.” In general, A&M’s recruiting process is “quick, decisive and action-oriented, just like its work.” Besides gauging intelligence and skills, one consultant says, the interview process is designed “to determine work style and whether or not the individual would be both competent and fun to work with.” It’s “intense, but that’s how they choose top performers.”

You're hired!

For many, “a phone screening” is the first step before advancing to interview rounds; subsequent office visits may include a lunch outing “to gauge personality fit.” A consultant breaks down the entry-level hiring rounds: “There were two levels of interviews outside the standard meet and greet times. The first one is behavioral, one-on-one interviews that walk through a resume and also may present some simple case questions. In the second round, an applicant is placed in a team with other applicants, given a case study from an actual client and must present before that client on the same day.”

This “live case” round is “unique and rigorous” in that candidates are “put before A&M executives, as well as client executives and questioned intensely on their thought process.” Potential hires “are asked to propose an approach to solving a complex strategy issue” and “present a recommendation.” What’s more, the group case interview approach will “demonstrate their ability to solve a problem within a team environment.” “Think *The Apprentice*,” adds a consultant in the business consulting division, which deploys this approach.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Lean, but not mean

Growing pains are one downer in terms of A&M’s culture: “My office’s and practice’s culture is superb, but our firm is struggling to understand the differences across its practices, and the required cultural changes it implies,” one respondent says. A&M is a “young company, and sometimes there aren’t established policies,” which can lead to some confusion about procedure. “However,” adds a source, “that is also good in that we are starting with a clean slate.”

Others point to “some degree of nepotism” and competition “between the practice groups” as sore spots. Still, the environment is “generally team-oriented within a particular group,” and respondents call their co-workers “friendly and professional,” as well as “exceptionally intelligent.” Despite becoming “a relatively large firm over the last five years,” a manager says A&M still strives to be “a boutique in terms of corporate culture. They foster an entrepreneurial environment and want to make sure that culture is not disrupted.” That means people “check their egos at the door” and remain “goal-oriented” at all times.

A “no-nonsense, cost-conscious” business model drives A&M to “run lean and pay our people well,” in a “totally performance-based” comp system that many employees applaud. And although A&M consultants are focused on business goals, “it is expected that you will have your values in the right order.” Says an insider, “There are plenty of talented people here who have your back, should life throw a curveball.”

Work hard, collect

“Compensation is probably not as high as at comparable firms, but is certainly attractive and is well matched to the lifestyle,” explains a senior director. “At all levels, comp is also more variable at A&M than at other firms—it’s not unheard of for low performers to get no bonus and high performers to receive a bonus equal to their base salary.” That’s because bonuses are “tied to specific sold work and profits on engagements.”

To some, it’s an “amazing bonus plan that really compensates everyone for their hard work,” and to others it’s “really a roll of the dice, depending on how many hours you are billed out and how many engagements the firm sells.” “On pay for performance, we mean it,” a managing director asserts. “I paid a director \$400K last year because he did a great job and brought in a significant performance bonus. His base was \$165K. He earned it, and boy was he happy.” “One caveat to our bonus is that a percent of it is forced into the company 401(k),” tips a consultant. “The good thing about this year is that everyone is now 100 percent vested in their 401(k) immediately, whereas the policy used to be 25 percent per year.”

In addition to bonuses, perks are “nothing exotic, just good, solid benefits” like “store discounts at retailers,” “good short-term disability coverage and parental leave,” “great health benefits,” and “BlackBerry service and snacks at the home office.” Another unique feature of A&M? There’s “no defined vacation policy.” Instead, time off “is a personal decision based on utilization goals.” “Take what you want or need,” shrugs a manager. A colleague adds, “Since everyone has a strong work ethic, A&M can do this. Fortunately, the policy has not been abused by many.”

Stay sharp to move up

Thanks to A&M’s current “growth mode” and sense of “meritocracy,” insiders say they “are able to advance quickly.” “However,” cautions a source, “consultants need to demonstrate the ability to excel in their area of chosen expertise” before they can reach the next rung on the ladder. “Three to five years is considered average” between levels, depending on the business unit.

“The culture does demand high levels of performance,” a managing director indicates, “but you are not expected to make managing director or be shown the door.” “Generally, the firm tries to play to each person’s strengths,” agrees another. Despite ongoing growth and an influx of new hires, declares an employee, “I do not think it will ever be strictly up or out.” A senior director explains that promotions are based “on contributions consistent with expectations,” so people may progress “as their individual talents and efforts permit.” A source offers a warning, however: “You can have one bad year, but not two in a row.”

As billable as possible

“Hours vary project to project,” but A&M consultants “generally work 50 to 60 hours a week,” with the lengthiest workdays “usually restricted to Monday through Thursday.” Of course, travel demands can take up time, too. A Dallas consultant tallies an average week: “45 billable hours, 15 travel hours, five administrative or personal and business development hours.” A peer in New York estimates working “50 hours per week on a client, 40 or less when on the beach.” As for project duration, the average is, well, anything but average. Explains one consultant, “The shortest for me has been one month. Longest has been nine months. On average, I would say three to six months with a lot of outliers outside of that range.”

Downtime, however, isn’t always plentiful. “I had three weeks of downtime when I started and have been 100 percent billable since then,” says a first-year consultant. “The firm does a good job at keeping consultants billable.” That’s a good thing, according to one director, because A&M “does not manage non-billable time well.” There’s “no face time,” but since performance is inextricably linked to compensation, a senior associate notes, “someone can work less and accept a smaller bonus; others can elect to work more and take less vacation, and earn a higher bonus.”

Keeping a healthy work/life balance “requires effective communication with the team,” and a senior director says, “We try to manage travel so that people are only out of town three or four nights a week, not five.” Another helpful factor is that “so far, we have resisted the urge to oversell projects by promising more than a reasonably focused team can deliver in 45 or 50 hours a week.” “Most weeks are reasonable, though project demands will cross the line from time to time,” a source notes.

Mostly local

While “travel is highly dependent on the office location and how established a client base the office has,” the pattern is toward regional staffing. “The firm is very focused on developing business locally,” a director claims. Most professionals who travel are typically “a few hours away from home” on a standard Monday through Thursday schedule. And, “the firm does a great job of trying to accommodate your preference on traveling.” “I travel just enough for it to be fun without being a burden,” one respondent shares. While most consider the travel itself to be manageable, an insider reveals a real hassle. “The one drawback is that booking flights is difficult because employees are encouraged to compare various online rates before booking.”

See-through

“Transparent” is the word contacts use to describe A&M’s management, saying there are “no surprises.” This openness also means “salary bands at all levels are public domain, and each individual knows what needs to be done to excel and be promoted.”

Managers and directors “have amazing experiences, are very accessible and are very interested in the development of all staff.” Insiders enjoy “excellent and regular communication with partners” as well as “regular interaction with the clients,” in part because of the firm’s small size.

“A brand new consultant has the opportunity to interact with C-level management from day one,” declares a staffer. A newbie confirms, “I have weekly contact with the CFO of the company I am working with. I have weekly meetings with director- and VP-level individuals across the business.” “We give our consultants a good bit of responsibility and exposure to top management at our clients,” adds a director. “We expect that we are hiring the best talent and want to reward and develop this with great experiences on projects.” Oh, and “yes, partners are client billable and do client work.”

Not quite there

The firm gets mixed marks on diversity, with one respondents saying A&M “unfortunately does not yet recognize the benefit of proactively recruiting minorities.” “We lack diversity,” a source admits. “It is something we are actively looking to improve.” Another insider is “hoping the firm will diversify as it grows” and expand its hiring efforts, but most agree that the lack of ethnic diversity is not based on overt discrimination—just a lack of solid programming to bring more diversity into offices. “One of our founders is a Filipino immigrant who started his career as a store clerk in New York City,” a source reports. “We are committed to making opportunities for everyone.”

One contact says that several years ago, when she started at the firm, “there were very few women. However, in the past two years, there have been great strides to hire more women.” Indeed, intake of “many junior women” bodes well for A&M’s gender balance, but it does not yet “have a lot of women in leadership roles who can act as role models and mentors to younger women who are developing their careers.” A director explains that while “there is no specific diversity policy that I am aware of, as a woman, I have been treated with as much respect as the men have.”

The outlook for GLBT employees is less rosy. “There are currently no visible GLBT initiatives within the firm,” and one consultant suggests that “the conservative nature of the firm would, unfortunately, prove an uncomfortable environment for an openly GLBT person.” A gay employee says he hasn’t seen anything “other than some nondiscrimination language in the policy handbook” to indicate that “anyone even knows how the company stands on this.” Nonetheless, another insider observes, “we have openly gay partners, executives and staff. Everyone is accepting. If they are not, they won’t last here.” And a senior associate plainly states, “A&M does not discriminate against anybody.”

Fat checks over fancy digs

Staffers in A&M offices across the country say “there seems to be a constant strain on available space as we get larger,” but add that the firm is in the process of renovating several offices to accommodate the growth. The fact that “directors are not given offices” seems egalitarian to some, except directors, one of whom says “we should be given an office for an amount of privacy and professionalism.” “Enclosed office space is limited to managing directors,” a source in Houston explains. “Everyone else hotels in cubicles in an environment so open it is difficult to concentrate.”

“According to senior management, A&M’s not much for having fancy offices or flashy perks,” a Chicago-based consultant reveals. “Rather, the firm saves on nice offices and passes those savings on to employees in their compensation. However, our office is still very nice and has everything you need.” A San Francisco source agrees, “I would much rather have a nice, but not extravagant, office and get paid more.” Besides, adds another, “we spend so much time outside our offices that it doesn’t make sense to spend the money on posh office space.”

Take charge of training

“We do have a new-hire training and onboarding program,” a consultant reports. “However, the real training is when you’re on an engagement. If you have a desire to pursue additional training or certifications, my own personal experience has been that if you ask your regional managing director, it will probably get approved.” Because the firm is “just now reaching a scale where

we can develop and maintain formal training curricula with in-house courses,” many say training is still sink-or-swim style: “You must take the initiative to plan your own training program and get it approved.”

A fairly recent development is “A&M University every fall,” which insiders call “a great time to get the practice together for training and culture building.” After that, expect “lots of informal mentoring and on-the-job training.”

Mars & Co

124 Mason Street
 Greenwich, CT 06830
 Phone: (203) 629-9292
 Fax: (203) 629-9432
www.marsandco.com

LOCATIONS

Greenwich, CT
 San Francisco, CA
 London
 Paris
 Shanghai
 Tokyo

PRACTICE AREAS

Strategy Consulting

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
CEO: Dominique G. Mars
2008 Employees: 280
2007 Employees: 250

UPPER

- Strong advancement opportunities

DOWNER

- Less formal training than larger firms

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Office-by-office recruiting contacts available at
www.marsandco.com/index_en.html



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Great niche consulting shop"
- "Lots of departures"
- "Small but very international"
- "Obscure, mysterious"

THE SCOOP

How the Martians do it

Mars & Co consults within the bounds of a unique philosophy. Its founder, Dominique Mars, left The Boston Consulting Group in 1979 and created his own firm to operate according to his belief that truly effective strategy consulting requires exclusivity. It's a simple cause and effect ideology: Making services available to any taker in the market negates the advantage of those services. Mars, therefore, provides its assistance to a single client in a given field, then seeks no others from that sector. Although its client list is confidential (prospective Martians are not even informed until its certain they'll be hired), the firm claims it has served Fortune 100 companies as well as other major international enterprises in a range of industries.

All together now

Mars maintains six offices on three continents: North America (Greenwich, Conn., and San Francisco), Europe (London and Paris) and Asia (Tokyo and Shanghai). Its staff of 280 are considered to be collectively available for assignments—wherever they may be located—and engagement teams are commonly assembled from multiple offices. The self-limiting nature of the firm's business approach does leave room for growth, however; its ultimate development goals place 400 to 450 consultants at the disposal of 30 to 40 major clients.

Talk of war

The language the firm uses to describe its engagements serves as a reminder that Mars was the name of the Roman god of war. The firm explains that it helps clients “clearly delineate the contours of their battlefields,” and dubs its analysis of competitors as an evaluation of “the enemy's forces.” Mars also colorfully states that “ripping apart” the nature of the industry is key to any project.

The heart of the matter

Lurking behind all this martial imagery, however, is a fairly traditional take on strategy consulting. The firm determines the available avenues for profit and then realigns a client's business for maximum return. Perhaps the strongest aspect of exclusivity is that, in the absence of any conflict of interest, the weaknesses of rival organizations can be fully and continually exploited.

Merit and you shall prosper

There are eight professional tiers at Mars & Co: associate consultant, senior associate consultant, consultant, senior consultant, project manager, vice president, senior vice president and executive vice president. As a commitment to building a pure meritocracy, the firm utilizes an apprenticeship format, and individuals are able to advance as soon as they've proven themselves worthy of more responsibility. The first three levels are available to new recruits, depending on education and background, and the upper echelons are reserved for internal promotions, since the firm claims never to hire from competitors.

GETTING HIRED

Taking care of its own

Anyone interested in a career at Mars & Co would do well to apply sooner rather than later, since opportunities may start to dwindle before long: The firm's aim is to grow to no more than 400 to 450 consultants, and it's already halfway there. Plus, there's a strong effort to keep staffers on once they're hired. To that end, the firm states that it promotes mainly from within.

That being said, the hiring process itself does not appear to be overly taxing. One source tells us candidates typically undergo “two rounds of three interviews with fairly senior people,” and interviews cover a “mix of cases and resume-related questions.” Mars also encourages prospective hires to take the bull by the horns and contact junior staffers “to get their direct unfettered opinion of life at Mars & Co.”

Applications should be directed to the candidate’s office of preference via e-mail (specific addresses are available on the firm’s web site). Although its consultants are strategy generalists, Mars notes that a degree from a leading school in “engineering, math, economics or one of the hard sciences” is required. The firm hires undergraduates and holders of advanced degrees (including MBAs, MSs and PhDs) directly from campuses, and it also considers experienced applicants with consulting or other relevant backgrounds.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Working at capacity

Insiders use adjectives like “energetic,” “intense” and “team-oriented” to describe the culture at Mars. Although one higher-up warns that the firm’s “long-term direction is unclear, given the remote ownership,” most respondents say things are going smoothly enough. In particular, we’re told that with a “solid base of clients” and plenty of “repeat customers,” there’s “no downtime between projects” and the firm is “running at full capacity.” The hours are “long” as a result, but they’re also flexible, and although late nights come up “near deadlines,” consultants say that are “able to have a life outside work at other times.” They also claim the work is “always interesting.” Projects may involve anywhere from no travel to working on site at the client full time, and many have “a mix” of both. Training is “mainly on the job” (the firm believes strongly in its apprenticeship format), but there are also several off-site training events and “some classroom seminars on certain topics.” In addition, a project manager notes that “opportunities for advancement seem very plentiful.”

When it comes to compensation packages, new hires are pleased with the instant gratification of a “sign-on bonus,” and longtimers enjoy accruing as many as “four weeks of vacation.” Benefits include a “401(k) match,” as well as “medical, dental, health, life and disability insurances (all free!).” In other perks, staffers mention free health club membership, “Friday lunch outings every week,” “ballgame trips” and a ski trip.

Aon Consulting Worldwide

Aon Center
200 East Randolph Street, 10th Floor
Chicago, IL 60601
Phone: (312) 381-4844
Fax: (312) 381-0240
www.aon.com/hcc

LOCATIONS

Chicago, IL (HQ)
115 consulting offices worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Communications
Compensation
Employee Benefits
Financial Advisory & Litigation Consulting
Health & Benefits
Human Capital Consulting
Human Resource Outsourcing
Retirement
Strategic Human Resource Consulting

THE STATS

Employer Type: Subsidiary of Aon Corporation
Ticker Symbol: AOC (NYSE)
Co-CEOs: Baljit Dail & Kathryn Hayley
2008 Employees: 6,300
2007 Employees: 6,300
2007 Revenue: \$1.35 billion
2006 Revenue: \$1.28 billion

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#9 – Human Resources Consulting

UPPER

- Plenty of paid time off

DOWNER

- No annual bonuses

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.aon.com/about/careers.jsp



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Good hours and stable company"
- "Not glamorous"
- "Rising"
- "Corporate-esque and impersonal"

THE SCOOP

(A)On the ball

Aon Consulting Worldwide is a human capital and management consulting firm with 115 offices worldwide. The company works with clients to promote more effective human resources spending, resulting in an increase in employee productivity and performance. Its services are designed to address the modern reality of diversity, where the workforces of global companies represent a multitude of demographics, cultures and work/lifestyle preferences. This diversity requires employers to be more flexible and offer more options than what was once the norm.

Aon Consulting also assists companies in outsourcing their HR services. Typical outsourced functions include evaluation and selection of job candidates, employment processing, training and talent development, and benefits administration and enrollment. As a corollary to its benefits work, the firm earns commission revenue from insurance companies for securing individual and group insurance contracts, usually for coverage of life, health and accidents.

Experiencing oneness

The company's connection to the insurance industry runs deep. Parent company Aon Corp. (Aon is the Gaelic word for "oneness") is the largest insurance brokerage in the world, based on brokerage revenue. Aon was established in 1982 by the merger of Combined International Corp. and Ryan Insurance Group. Administration of employee health plans evolved and spread into other areas of HR, until finally in the mid-1980s, Aon spun off its human capital consulting business as Aon Consulting.

Staying faithful to its Gaelic nomenclature, Aon's business is conducted under a philosophy of inclusivity, with each unit or subsidiary acting as an extension of the corporate body. The resources of Aon Consulting are therefore fully available to the clients of Aon.

Aon's brawn

Of the myriad consulting services offered by the company, the strongest area is benefits. Aon Consulting advises clients on structuring, funding and administering programs dealing with health and welfare of employees, retirement, executive benefits, absence management, compliance, employee commitment, investment advisory and elective benefits services. Its focus on diversity forms the context in which these services unfold, with the ultimate goal being satisfaction of local needs while maintaining global strategies and policies. This allows decisions to be made efficiently from a central headquarters without ignoring the individual complexities of far-flung branches.

In recognition of these efforts, the firm was given *Business Insurance* magazine's 2006 and 2007 Reader's Choice award for Best Employee Benefits Consultancy.

In times of trouble

In addition to its human resources consulting, Aon Consulting also offers financial advisory and litigation consulting services, including financial statement and white-collar investigations, securities litigation, financial due diligence and financial valuation services. Included in this practice area is IT risk consulting, which covers a spectrum of IT issues, such as inappropriate computer use (dirty forwards), security management (hackers) or computer forensics and e-discovery (retrieval of the dirty forwards that the hacker deleted).

Clients in this practice area include law firms, corporations, government entities or other organizations that are either being investigated or are carrying out investigations, and wish to address the risks. Consultants in this division, including former law enforcement officials, attorneys, researchers and threat management experts, tackle issues of due diligence, embezzlement, commercial bribery, theft of intellectual or physical property, fraud, sexual harassment and workplace violence.

United by a common purpose (and parent)

Aon Consulting sometimes follows the example of its own clients and turns to outside sources for help. When the firm assists a client in determining executive compensation, it utilizes fellow Aon subsidiary McLagan Partners, a pay and performance consultancy. McLagan specializes in compensation surveys that provide details about salaries, bonuses and long-term incentives for a range of functions and positions. It also conducts pay and productivity studies investigating the link between organizational and/or individual performance and pay. These resources allow Aon Consulting to set benchmarks for salary, bonus, commissions, stock options and other pay structures.

The company also takes full advantage of the expertise of subsidiary Radford Surveys + Consulting, a provider of compensation market intelligence to the technology and life sciences industries. Radford collects and controls global compensation survey databases, encompassing more than two million technology and life sciences companies of all sizes and stages of development.

GETTING HIRED

The system's working

Insiders at Aon Consulting say there's no definitive hiring system in place at the firm, but that "each group has a slightly different hiring process." By and large, qualified candidates go through two or three rounds of interviews, the first of which may be a phone screening. A few staffers recall meeting with approximately four people during an in-office round, including VPs and senior consultants. Overall, interviews are "rather straightforward" with "no surprises." An associate adds, "There is currently a testing system in place for new hires that exhibits your technical knowledge—or lack thereof." He notes, "The new hires we have been bringing onboard are quite good, so I assume the technical exam is working."

Interested candidates are encouraged to apply online through Aon's web site; open positions are searchable by area of expertise and location.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Strong support groups

Staffers say Aon Consulting's dress code is "generally business professional to business casual," although "suits are expected if you are going on a client visit." Most insiders describe their colleagues as "friendly," with some observing that the firm is "huge on diversity and inclusion." In fact, notes a manager, "five minutes on the web site will turn up several pages of information regarding Aon's commitment to diversity." Specifically, he adds, there are six networking groups at the firm: the "African American Networking Group; Asian & Pacific Islander Networking Group; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgendered Networking Group (GLBT); Latino Networking Group; People with Disabilities Networking Group; and the Women's Networking Group."

Promotion potential is unclear

One source notes that groups at the firm can be "very tight-knit," but adds that "if you are in that social circle, you will be fine." Being connected can also be a strategic career move; in the eyes of this staffer, when it comes to promotions, "Being close to higher-ups is more important than your performance." Meanwhile, an associate with five years' experience at the firm warns, "Opportunities to advance are available, but are limited and a long time in coming. It is best if you are already hired on at the associate VP level or higher if you want to be an officer of the company within a reasonable time frame."

Then again, a manager insists, "throughout the organization, there are generally good opportunities to try different positions, as well as to move up the ladder." Aon does claim on its web site that it is "a learning company," offering "a variety of training and

development opportunities, inside and outside the organization.” An annual appraisal process ensures employees and managers “work together to identify the major assignments the employee will complete during the year,” and the firm’s “Aon University” offers training through four different channels: a school of business, a school of sales, a school of risk and consulting, and a school of technology. In addition, staffers “may be eligible to receive reimbursement for job-related courses and degree programs.”

Tons of time off

One longtimer comments, “My personal experience is that Aon has done a great job of trying to make Aon a great place to work, regardless of where you fit in.” To that end, we’re told there is “no face time needed,” and the “hours are flexible.” A higher-up explains that, while “Aon officially supports a 37.5-hour workweek, certain areas of the company see 40 to 50 hours a week.” Or, as an associate puts it, “hours are project-based. They can be light one week with very heavy overtime the next.” Still, he qualifies, “this is more the nature of the industry and client demands than it is an Aon issue.”

Some respondents feel that things may even be “too laid-back”; an insider warns, “Do not expect a challenging environment.” There’s also plenty of paid time off: Sources say the firm offers “two weeks of paid vacation,” “five days of paid sick time,” “four or five paid personal days,” and “eight paid holidays.” A manager notes that “sick time can accumulate indefinitely; however, the maximum yearly carryover for vacation time is one or two weeks.” Additional benefits include a “great medical plan selection,” “Roth 401(k) and 401(k) with employer matching,” and “matching gifts to charitable organizations.” In fact, the firm insists that it offers “one of the most comprehensive benefits packages in the industry.” We’re also told that the more senior you are, the more comfortable your surroundings—an insider observes that “higher-up offices (consultants, VPs, etc.) are along the windows,” whereas junior analysts sit in windowless “cubes.”

A tight budget, for better or worse

“Though Aon is generally an excellent place to work and you will learn a lot from the senior talent,” an associate points out, “the budget is very tight, resulting in low salaries and annual raises. Expense reports are scrutinized down to the penny and are questioned thoroughly.” Plus, we’re told that “no year-end bonuses are given.” One staffer moans, “All Aon employees must pay for their own parking, which can be very expensive in the urban offices” (although he adds that “there is a commuter reimbursement program to help cover these costs”). In general, when it comes to overall compensation, “they really should do more to keep talented people,” a staffer remarks.

An associate explains what might be behind the belt tightening: “We have a new CEO at the helm, and restructuring, layoffs and serious cost cutting have been the name of the game for over a year now as he makes his mark.” As for the good news: “As a result, Aon has been catching up with major competitors Mercer and Willis in terms of market share and has enjoyed an increasingly outstanding reputation in the market. This has made the stock go up, as the analysts like what they see. However,” the source adds, “what’s good for Wall Street isn’t always good for the rank and file who are working longer hours for less pay to help the top and bottom lines look the way they do.” Still, he concludes, “I remain hopeful that the reorganization dust will settle soon and Aon will stabilize over the coming years.” A manager is more optimistic in the short term, reporting, “Employee morale has generally improved over the course of the past couple of years following the leadership change at the top.”

Analysis Group, Inc.

111 Huntington Avenue
10th Floor
Boston, MA 02199
Phone: (617) 425-8000
Fax: (617) 425-8001
www.analysisgroup.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (HQ)

Chicago, IL
Dallas, TX
Denver, CO
Los Angeles, CA
Menlo Park, CA
New York, NY
San Francisco, CA
Washington, DC
Montreal

PRACTICE AREAS

Accounting Litigation Services • Antitrust • Commercial Litigation & Damages • Energy • Entertainment & Media • Environmental Economics • Financial Institutions • Health Care Consulting Services • Innovation Management • Intellectual Property • Labor & Employment • Securities & Financial Instruments • Strategy & Analytics • Telecommunications • Transfer Pricing & Tax • Valuation

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
President & CEO: Martha S. Samuelson
2008 Employees: 437
2007 Employees: 400 +



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Small, very smart people"
- "Very quant-oriented"
- "Family-friendly, collegial"
- "Stagnant"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#5 – Economic Consulting

UPPER

- "The variety of case assignments"

DOWNER

- Casework can be dry and routine

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.analysisgroup.com/analysisgroup/careers.aspx

E-mail: recruiter@analysisgroup.com

THE SCOOP

Corporations and courtrooms

Analysis Group provides economic, financial and business strategy consulting to corporations, law firms and government entities. The firm specializes in delivering independent, fact-based assessments of complex legal and business issues. After more than 25 years of service, its curriculum vitae spans thousands of cases across an array of industries. Analysis Group is contracted by law firms for help with pretrial discovery, development of economic and financial models, testimony preparation, cross-analysis of expert opposition and other litigation services. Corporations and government agencies seek other services, such as financial planning, tax and transfer pricing issues, company and asset valuations, cost/benefit analysis, market research, and merger and acquisition strategies.

The firm adheres to four operating tenets, which give shape to a kind of business philosophy. First is access: Analysis Group maintains close ties to specialists—top minds in academia, leaders in industry and government insiders—to ensure that clients are exposed to the best people and ideas. Second, collaboration, has the firm encouraging strong relationships between consulting teams and clients, improving communication, effectiveness and satisfaction. Next is responsiveness, a principle of flexibility to ensure that services are customized to each client. And finally, pragmatism: Analysis Group believes all strategies should focus on relevant, applicable solutions.

Opening Analysis

Analysis Group began in 1981 in Belmont, Mass., springing forth from the minds of Bruce Stangle and Michael Koehn. Stangle and Koehn, former Arthur D. Little consultants, and both carrying PhDs, intended to fuse academic practice with business litigation by applying economic research. The firm primarily consulted on mergers and acquisitions to start; today, Analysis Group consultants, working from 10 offices in North America, have experience in all areas of economics as it applies to the legal and business world, including securities, health care, intellectual property, antitrust and commercial damages.

Quantum leap

There is no business within a vacuum. It must be carried out in the marketplace, an unpredictable place where the actions of single entities can create strong ripple effects. The state of the marketplace today has been colored by recent events such as the subprime mortgage meltdown and the stock options backdating scandal, plus the earlier debacles of Enron, WorldCom, Tyco and a few others that devastated the public trust with repeated fraud. As a result, the intensity of regulatory scrutiny has been ratcheted up, increasing greatly the number of legal cases brought against businesses. Analysis Group fits snugly into this climate, riding the crest of the litigation wave. It has provided court-oriented services to a number of major corporations, including Disney, Broadcom, TiVo, Microsoft, Nike, Citibank, Pfizer and Salomon Smith Barney, on cases dealing with antitrust laws, securities issues, product liability, intellectual property and valuation. The firm has also supported attorneys at more than 500 law firms, including the country's 25 largest.

Judgment in the amount of ...

Analysis Group can boast of some high-profile cases, such as the recent and widely reported *Liberty Media v. IAC/InterActiveCorp*, a dispute between IAC CEO Barry Diller and majority shareholder Liberty Media over control of the company and its board. The client, IAC, secured the right to proceed with its plan to split into five separate entities. Liberty Media had challenged Diller's breakup plan, alleging that his control by proxy of Liberty's majority voting stake could not be used in a manner contrary to their best interests. The case was decided by a Delaware Chancery Court judge following a five-day trial. IAC's counsel Wachtell, Lipton retained Analysis Group to assist in the presentation of expert testimony regarding the proposed transaction. The Analysis Group team supported an expert in corporate governance who analyzed the positive impact on shareholder value of IAC's proposed spin-offs, and provided rebuttal testimony critiquing Liberty Media's expert's testimony.

The firm has also been involved in impressive settlements from its trips to the courtroom. In September 2007, client BASF Corporation was awarded almost \$170 million for a breach of contract case. BASF believed that Lyondell Chemical Co. had been overcharging it for a chemical compound over an eight-year transaction period and then hiding the discrepancies. Jonathan Arnold, an Analysis Group managing principal, reviewed Lyondell's pricing agreements with other customers and determined that BASF was correct, then testified to that effect as an expert witness. Arnold also calculated damages of \$170 million—more than twice the maximum sum originally proposed by Lyondell.

Prior to that, in January 2007, client New World TMT was granted a default judgment of \$2.8 billion in compensatory and punitive damages. New World, a Chinese company, contended that California-based PrediWave Corp. had defrauded it of almost \$700 million in investment capital and purchases of faulty video-on-demand cable systems. The Analysis Group consulting team made an assessment of the profits earned by PrediWave, and arrived at an estimate of the economic harm to New World, which was used by the court to determine compensatory damages.

The firm also applies its quantitative expertise in business strategy engagements. For example, they helped a leading chemical company achieve a major growth plan by mitigating the risks of its investments in current energy markets. They used statistical modeling to simulate future market conditions in light of potential policy changes and considered financial hedges the company could employ to balance risks. Their analysis also took into account the use of complex financial instruments and the realities of available financial products in energy markets. Using Analysis Group's strategy, the client was able to develop a risk management approach consisting of both contractual and market mechanisms that allowed them to move forward with their planned investment.

Documented knowledge

Along with its client work, the firm regularly publishes reports and analyses on a number of topical business and legal subjects. In early 2008, Vice President Judson Jaffe and Harvard University environmental economist Robert Stavins published, through the AEI Brookings Institute, a report titled, "Linking a U.S. Cap-and-Trade System for Greenhouse Gas Emissions." Managing Principal John Jarosz, Vice President Michael J. Chapman, former Manager Douglas Ellis and L. Scott Oliver of Morrison & Foerster published "The Economic Implications (and Uncertainties) of Obtaining Permanent Injunctive Relief After eBay v. MercExchange" in The Federal Circuit Bar Journal.

In 2007, the firm published "The Effect on Federal Spending of Legislation Creating a Regulatory Framework for Follow-on Biologics: Key Issues and Assumptions," a study by Managing Principal Genia Long, Vice President Richard Mortimer and academic affiliate Henry Grabowski. Grabowski later drew on the report in his Congressional testimony on competition between generic and branded drugs. Also in 2007, Analysis Group sponsored an amicus curiae brief to the Supreme Court on an antitrust case involving pulp and paper company Weyerhaeuser. The brief examined economic issues in the case and supported a reversal of the lower court ruling against Weyerhaeuser.

GETTING HIRED

Serious problem solvers

Anyone thinking about applying to Analysis Group should consider the name carefully: It's clear the preferred candidates are those who like to crunch numbers. According to the firm, "Much of our work is grounded in economic analysis," and, "our culture of intellectual challenge and commitment to teamwork consistently attracts people who thrive on problem solving." Backing up this claim are profiles of various staffers, specifying their research areas and extensive qualifications.

Prospective candidates who fit the bill are invited to review the firm's open positions and to apply by sending a resume, cover letter and unofficial transcripts to recruiter@analysisgroup.com. As the firm has 10 office locations, candidates for broad openings such as analyst and associate are asked to specify their geographic preference in the cover letter. Some positions are

limited to particular locations, so it's worth reading job descriptions carefully before applying. Summer internships are also available in some locales on an as-needed basis, and interested parties can apply via the same process.

Graduate school required

Those looking to start higher-up on the career ladder or to forge a "long-term career" with the company should take note that, for senior positions, the firm "requires a commitment to completing a course of graduate study." Analysis Group actively recruits at dozens of undergraduate and graduate schools around the country, and keeps a schedule of its campus events on its web site.

Applicants shouldn't have to wait too long for a response. The company insists that "if your qualifications match our staffing needs, we will contact you within two to three weeks of receiving your resume and cover letter." When it comes to the interview process itself, one analyst recalls encountering "some probing questions to test financial acumen and structured thinking, as well as several fit questions about personality and working characteristics."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Analyze this

Insiders are pleased with the "laid-back" and "collegial" atmosphere, and the "flat organizational structure" at Analysis Group, where "everyone is available to everyone else." A vice president who reports workweeks of "40 to 45 hours" and zero travel insists, "The firm offers great flexibility in balancing work and life." At the same time, there are plenty of "intellectual challenges" and opportunities "to work on cutting-edge business problems." An executive claims, "We do very high-quality work and turn out products that we can be proud of."

We're also told that salaries are competitive and that the firm "contributes to 401(k) accounts." Staffers mingle at "very good periodic parties and special events," and as another perk, the firm's close ties to academic affiliates can come in handy for high-performing analysts looking to apply to grad school. When it comes to promotions, "each person advances according to their contributions," and there's a "combination of official and informal mentoring and on-the-job training" to help along the way.

Archstone Consulting

Four Stamford Plaza
107 Elm Street, 6th Floor
Stamford, CT 06902
Phone: (203) 940-8200
Fax: (203) 940-8201
www.archstoneconsulting.com

LOCATIONS

Stamford, CT (HQ)

Chicago, IL
New York, NY
San Francisco, CA
Amsterdam
London
Toronto

PRACTICE AREAS

CFO Advisory

Business Performance Management/Business Intelligence
Finance Strategy
Finance Transformation & Productivity

Operations

IT & Outsourcing Advisory
Sourcing & Procurement
Supply Chain Management

Strategy & Organization Effectiveness

General Strategy
Growth & Innovation
Organization Effectiveness

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

CEO & President: Todd Lavieri

2008 Employees: 250 +

2007 Employees: 250 +

2007 Revenue: \$74.5 million

2006 Revenue: \$60 million

UPPER

- Minimal bureaucracy

DOWNER

- Lacks the prestige of larger firms

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

E-mail: recruiting@archstoneconsulting.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Emerging"
- "Still finding their way"
- "Entrepreneurial"
- "Smaller, less known"

THE SCOOP

Archstone be nimble, Archstone be quick

“We are not going to create a company where the \$1.5 million partner manages the \$1 million partner who manages the \$750,000 partner who does the work,” said Archstone CEO and co-founder Todd Lavieri to *Consulting* magazine in 2004. Founded just one year earlier, in 2003, Archstone was a reaction to what Lavieri saw as a bloated consulting industry. By staying small, the firm would be able to deliver pointed solutions with the speed and accuracy that massive consulting firms couldn’t offer. Many of Archstone’s employees are refugees from much larger firms (even its original staff came largely from Deloitte and A.T. Kearney), who were attracted to the firm’s more agile culture.

In addition, Lavieri wanted to analyze the returns on the firm’s fees so that projects wouldn’t balloon out of control. He also wanted to concentrate on select industries like consumer products, retail, life sciences, industrial and high-tech manufacturing, utilities and energy, and financial services. To these industries, Archstone offers primarily strategic, operational, IT and CFO advisory services. It also devotes considerable resources to thought leadership, producing a variety of articles, white papers, case studies, podcasts, forums and industry events.

Bringing home the hardware

Archstone’s philosophy seems to be earning it official recognition within the industry. The firm was No. 6 on *Consulting* magazine’s list of the Best Firms to Work For in 2007, and it also landed in the No. 6 slot in the category of meeting clients’ needs. Brown-Wilson Group’s 2007 *Black Book of Outsourcing* listed the firm as the No. 4 boutique outsourcing advisory firm, and No. 6 among top advisors by initiative specialization—ITO. Said Scott Wilson of Brown-Wilson Group, “Archstone Consulting consistently received high scores in all categories and subcategories for not only the boutique firms, but also its advisors by specialization.”

Third-party validation and recognition continued in 2008 as the Brown-Wilson Group again recognized Archstone as a top-10 boutique outsourcing advisory firm. The company also was recognized as one of the fastest growing companies by *Inc.* magazine, based on four straight years of significant revenue growth.

Be careful what you wish for

However, Archstone might be a little too successful at its objective of staying small, if the 2004 interview with *Consulting* magazine is to be believed. As of this writing, the firm still has a way to go to attain Lavieri’s stated goal of 500 to 600 employees and \$200 million in revenue by 2009. Still, the firm has been successful enough to advise 24 companies in the Fortune 100 and 58 in the Fortune 500, in spite of originally thinking that most of its clients would be at the high end of the middle market. A big question is whether Archstone can maintain its founding principles while it steadily becomes a major international consulting firm working with the world’s largest corporations.

However, Lavieri’s five-year goal of opening two European offices and establishing an Asian presence have already been met. Archstone opened an Amsterdam office in late 2005 and a London office in January 2006. In June 2006, the firm went north of the border with its first acquisition—the Toronto-based Hazelton Group. Known for its research, Hazelton has now become the core of Archstone’s strategic innovations, creating new products, services and value propositions for new and existing products. The Asian presence was established in October 2007, when the firm created a strategic global alliance with Entru Consulting Partners, one of the consulting branches of Korean mega-corporation LG. Archstone especially hopes to use the alliance with LG to provide Asian clients with supply chain management and IT strategy.

Rubbing the crystal ball

For those wanting to play psychic with Archstone's future, the backgrounds of its February 2008 promotions to associate principal might be better indicators than tea leaves. In its European operations, Fred Betito brought over 18 years of experience to the firm, especially in business transformation. Before Archstone, he was a senior director at Levi Strauss & Company. Jason Logman was promoted in the CFO advisory services practice, where he specialized in business performance management. Logman came to Archstone from Sears Holding, where he was the director of financial planning and analysis. Chona Salamero was in the firm's CFO advisory services practice. Her 12-plus years of experience have focused on business performance management for consumer packaged goods, industrial segments and manufacturing. Previously, Salamero was a senior manager with BearingPoint.

Deloitte also seems to continue as a training ground for Archstone staff. Deloitte alumnus Michael McKinney was promoted to associate principal in Archstone's operations and manufacturing practices. His 18+ years of experience have made him a leader in operating flexibility, speed to market, cost effectiveness and IT outsourcing. Michael Unger, promoted in the consumer practice, was not only a senior manager at Deloitte, but also a regional merchandise manager at Macy's. He has over 17 years of experience, mainly focused on enterprise-wide transformations, retail strategy and operations, in the U.S., Europe and Asia Pacific.

Research—the gift that keeps on giving

As its buyout of Hazelton suggests, Archstone has taken a keen interest in research. As the end of 2007 approached, gift card usage across the United States skyrocketed, and the media immediately grabbed hold of Archstone's study on the phenomenon. Reporters turned to Archstone not only for statistics (like the firm's prediction of a 25 percent increase in gift cards, to a record \$35 million), but also for direct quotes to analyze the reasons behind the surge. Then in 2008, as the economy started heading south, the media turned to Archstone again to help explain the negative side of gift cards. The gift card study was just one part of Archstone's array of research on 2007 holiday retail season. In early 2008, the firm released a major study on inventory levels and productivity at retailers and consumer packaged goods manufacturers like Wal-Mart and Kellogg. Media outlets were particularly interested in the study's finding that most companies had not been able to make meaningful inventory level reductions, despite heavy financial investment in the area.

Another 2008 study was the Manufacturing Executive Agenda for 2008, which surveyed 265 manufacturing executives and found that almost three-quarters believed the current market pressures, including sharply rising commodity prices, a sluggish economy and foreign competition, may be triggering significant transformational changes within manufacturing organizations.

GETTING HIRED

Watch and learn

For those looking for a quick rundown of what Archstone wants from its applicants, the easiest route is to watch a few podcasts on the firm's web site. In a five-minute clip, titled "Life@Archstone—Joining Archstone Consulting," the firm's director of recruiting explains that the hiring process is "personal, responsive and efficient," and stresses that a crucial quality in candidates is a "passion" for consulting. Another shorter clip features a current associate with a year's experience discussing Archstone's strengths, including frequent client exposure, opportunities for international work and a creative work environment. While her perspective may be biased, her descriptions do give some useful insight into life at the firm. A handful of similar "Success Stories" are also available, in written form, for review on the web site.

Get the 411 from FAQs

Additional information is included on an FAQ page, where the firm goes into detail about its project teams ("small in size" with "three to seven consultants and a principal"), "international growth plans" and typical travel schedule ("four days at our client"

and Fridays at the “home offices”). Archstone also describes its hiring process, which for entry-level staffers usually consists of two rounds of behavioral and case study interviews. Experienced hires have an initial phone screen and may be called in to the office for “multiple interviewing days.”

How to get in touch

Archstone actively recruits at more than a dozen schools across the country, and posts the recruiting event schedule on its web site. A summer associate program is open to business school students after their first year. Soon-to-be grads can review descriptions of the entry-level analyst and associate positions on the Web, and can request more information by e-mailing recruiter@archstoneconsulting.com.

Experienced professionals are also invited to contact the firm via the same e-mail address. In addition, a handful of open positions are listed on a single page of the firm’s site, and interested parties can apply to them online by submitting contact information, a cover letter, a resume and expected compensation.

Hay Group

The Wanamaker Building
 100 Penn Square East
 Philadelphia, PA 19107
 Phone: (215) 861-2000
 Fax: (215) 861-2111
www.haygroup.com

LOCATIONS

Philadelphia, PA (HQ)
 88 offices in 47 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Building Effective Organizations
 Capability Assessment
 Employee & Customer Surveys
 Executive Rewards
 Job Evaluation
 Leadership Transformation
 Performance Management
 Reward Information Services
 Reward Strategies
 Talent Management

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: Chris Matthews
2008 Employees: 2,800
2007 Employees: 2,430
2007 Revenue: \$443 million
2006 Revenue: \$372 million



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Top HR guys"
- "Routine projects"
- "They are everywhere!"
- "One-trick pony"

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#5 (Tie) – Human Resources Consulting

UPPERS

- "Rapid growth creates many new opportunities"
- "Technical rigor"
- Interesting and challenging client assignments

DOWNERS

- "Patchy hands-on support from leaders"
- Promotions can be slow
- Work "sometimes gets repetitive"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.haygroup.com/ww/careers

THE SCOOP

Baled together

Hay Group is a Philadelphia-based human resources consulting firm. Founded in 1943 by Edward N. Hay, the company now serves more than 7,000 clients worldwide, from 88 locations in 47 countries. It specializes in business organization and employee engagement, aiming to resolve management issues so a corporation can focus on and execute its business strategy. Hay Group's experts come from an array of technical and professional backgrounds, including chemicals, consumer products, education, psychology, finance, health care, research and development, and telecommunications.

In addition, the company independently conducts research and benchmarking studies, including employee engagement surveys, leadership assessment, and benefits and compensation studies.

On the Hay ride

Hay Group has a portfolio of services ready to deploy to each client. Among these, the firm facilitates talent development, advises on corporate hierarchical structure, analyzes cost/benefit ratios and guides management in ranking and incentivizing performance. Hay Group attempts to service its clients longitudinally, monitoring their development well after the initial solutions have been implemented.

The company also maintains an online tool, known as Hay Group PayNet, which acts as a portal providing instant access to rewards and benefits information. The PayNet databases feature information gathered from 13,000 of the world's largest organizations in 67 countries.

Come prepared

When servicing a client, Hay Group starts by researching the current business climate in that client's sector. It examines changes in the market, degrees of regulation and outside intervention, international competition and shifts in technology. Hay Group can then use its diagnostics to determine what solutions would most benefit the client. The most common difficulties businesses face, according to the firm, are mergers and acquisitions, which often fail to deliver value as expected; bloated organization matrices, particularly when expanding to new markets; and ineffective internal HR teams that are overwhelmed by complex staffing issues.

Finding the cream of the crop

Furthering its reputation for insider insight, Hay Group often partners with publications to recognize standout companies. Every year, for example, Hay Group joins *Fortune* magazine in ranking the most admired companies. The firm's researchers also analyze what separates the best from the rest, looking at attraction and retention of talent, leadership development, performance management, strategy implementation, innovation and success in operating globally. General Electric topped the chart in 2007, with Starbucks and Toyota rounding out the top three.

Stemming from its work with *Fortune*, Hay Group has allied with *Human Resource Executive* magazine to rank the most admired companies in terms of HR practices. Supplementing the rankings, they hosted a "webinar" (just when you thought you'd heard your last Internet neologism) explaining the methodology of the rankings and providing insight into the successes and failures of different HR practices. The top-three finishers for 2007 were Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, FedEx and Starbucks.

Delving again into the notion of corporate excellence, the firm also determined the 2007 Best Companies for Leaders, a list sponsored by *Chief Executive* magazine. The survey, which ranked the top-20 companies, evaluated almost 800 entities, with General Electric winning top honors here as well. Procter & Gamble and Pepsi took second and third place, respectively. And in 2008, *The Wall Street Journal* partnered with Hay Group to conduct the firm's annual CEO Compensation Study, an examination of CEO pay (in all forms) at some of the largest companies in the United States. The study focused on 200 companies with more than \$5 billion in annual revenue that filed their proxy statements after October 1, 2007. The firm's

research revealed that the median base salary of CEOs was around \$1 million in 2007, and that, additionally, it was the first year in which performance-based plans overtook stock options as the most popular form of long-term incentive compensation.

GETTING HIRED

Sophisticated process

The hiring process at Hay Group reportedly “depends on the position.” There is “usually an initial interview with the hiring manager, followed by interviews with multiple staff members,” a consultant explains. These sometimes take place “over multiple days, and involve all levels of the team.” Candidates will also undergo “a battery of tests,” normally “standardized psychological testing.” A contact says, “If all are a go and the position is open, an offer is extended.” Overall, the interview process is “very sophisticated,” and candidates are assessed with “proprietary tools.” One insider notes, “HR consulting is our focus, so we do it well.”

We’re told that the firm “does not do much hiring right out of school,” and instead is “usually looking for people with at least a year or two of experience.” Many of those who elect Hay Group over other consulting firms are attracted to its “open, cultural environment.” Some respondents say they “did not even apply to other firms” because they were certain Hay Group’s “growth prospects, global coverage, innovation within the industry and market strength” were right for them.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

No hand-holding

At Hay Group, insiders have “lots of freedom” and enjoy “great relationships with other consultants.” The firm’s “culture of openness fosters personal accountability” and a “collaborative” working style. And while staffers enjoy a great deal of “autonomy,” there is still a “very supportive” vibe. Respondents describe their colleagues as “insightful, courageous and committed.”

We’re also told that in this “intellectual environment,” there is “not a lot of professional mentoring or hand-holding.” Some enjoy this hands-off environment—one consultant remarks, “If I do well, they leave me alone. That is great motivation to do well.” But for those who are looking for a bit more structure, the firm does offer a “combination of official and unofficial training” and, “for younger associates, Hay Group tries to do meaningful training.” Those with more experience appreciate that they are “not forced into training on things that they have already learned.” As for management as a whole, consultants say “decision-making can be centralized” in some areas, such as layoffs, and point out the “limited career development focus.”

It’s a well-balanced life

Respondents say Hay Group offers “personal support for life issues,” and consultants are offered “a lot of personal flexibility to allow for work/life balance.” For instance, it is “easy to work from home.” Sources say they work 50 hours a week, on average, but “experienced consultants can get their work done in under 50.” Occasionally, consultants “do some work on weekends to catch up,” but this is “not usually more than an hour or two.” In general, says one insider, “The company recognizes that people have lives outside of the office, and they accommodate that as much as possible.”

Project length varies significantly—for some, “a normal cycle for projects is one year,” whereas others average around “two months for most projects.” Assignments “tend to be overlapping,” sources say, so “very few people at Hay Group devote themselves exclusively to one project at a time.” And downtime may be a rarity, as consultants are “always assigned to some client work, all of the time.”

Staffers travel “two or three times a month” and are “not usually gone more than one or two nights” at a time. Being on the road is “always tough,” a source admits, but at Hay Group, “it is fairly minimal compared to other consultancies.” That said, travel demands are “very dependent on the clients and projects you work on.” While “many people travel minimally or not at all,” some say they travel “extensively.” But more often than not, “travel is up to the individual consultant.” A contact remarks, “International projects are available, if you are interested. Also, it is easier to meet targets if you travel.”

Taken care of

Hay Group offers “great health insurance and retirement plans,” “health care spending accounts” and an annual incentive plan that is offered to all employees. Payouts are based on company, business unit and individual performance, and are distributed on December 15th of each year. Even nonpartners are content with their compensation: “I am not an owner, but I feel I make a good living and the work is interesting,” says one contact. The firm makes “good contributions to 401(k)—5 percent plus a 3 percent match.” Vacation and time off are also sufficient. All consultants “start with four weeks of vacation, regardless of level,” and the firm closes during the week between Christmas and New Year’s. Consultants also appreciate the opportunity to give back: Hay Group has a “large involvement in United Way,” and has done “extensive pro bono work for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.”

As for their lodgings, Chicago-based consultants “can’t reasonably ask for much more,” since they have “great cubes with super views,” and “computers and BlackBerries that work.” The Philadelphia space is “centrally located, in the middle of the city.” A consultant based in that office says of his digs: “It is very convenient and close to many things the city has to offer. It is also very convenient for clients to visit.” Less conveniently located are the New York offices, situated in a “bad location”—Jersey City, N.J. (not exactly New York).

Go ahead and get comfortable

Promotions at Hay Group are reportedly “performance-based,” but the firm does not have a strict up-or-out policy. According to an insider, the firm has plenty of “long-tenured junior people who do not want to advance.” A colleague adds, “If you are settled at a level and like what you do, no one is forcing you out. You are accepted at that level and your work is appreciated.” Those who spend “an abnormally long time at a specific level” undergo a review process, and Hay Group finds them “a better fit within the company.” On the flip side, “consultants can advance quickly” if they want to—and bumps in stature are awarded when “you are prepared for a bigger role.”

Ethnic minorities are scarce

Hay Group has “a lot of senior women, including several general managers and key partners.” The firm provides “special training for young female associates on networking with other women, and on developing relationships,” a source explains. Some feel, though, that “maternity impacts your career” at the firm.

Receptivity to gay and lesbian employees is “not an issue.” One source notes, “I certainly know some employees who are gay, and their sexual preference has not held them back in any way.” A colleague adds that at Hay Group, “individual preferences are respected for everyone, regardless of their sexual preference.” On a less positive note, the firm’s “track record needs to improve” when it comes to ethnic minorities, since there are “not a lot of senior minorities” at the firm.

IMS Health Incorporated

901 Main Avenue
Suite 612
Norwalk, CT 06851
Phone: (203) 845-5200
www.imshealth.com

LOCATIONS

Norwalk, CT (HQ)

Additional offices in 76 countries worldwide

PRACTICE AREAS

Launch & Brand Management
Portfolio Optimization
Sales Force Effectiveness

THE STATS

Employer Type: Public Company

Ticker Symbol: RX (NYSE)

Chairman & CEO: David R. Carlucci

2007 Employees: 7,950

2006 Employees: 7,600 +

2007 Revenue: \$2.19 billion

2006 Revenue: \$1.95 billion

RANKING RECAP

Practice Area

#5 – Pharmaceutical & Health Care Consulting

UPPERS

- Reasonable hours and minimal travel
- "Chance to learn the industry very rapidly"
- "Lots of opportunities to interact with senior management and clients early on"
- "People are passionate about health care"

DOWNERS

- "We are ultimately a unit of IMS, a sloth-like data behemoth that simply does not 'get' consulting"
- "More work on the plate than our office can handle right now"
- Poor HR support
- "Occasional office drama/politics"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.imshealth.com/careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Super in life sciences"
- "Known for data"
- "Friendly"
- "Rapid acquisition, some indigestion"

THE SCOOP

On the pharm

Like a cosmic houseguest, IMS Health has peeked into the medicine cabinets of the world. The company is a provider of market intelligence to the pharmaceutical and health care industries, making use of data gathered from a network of suppliers that comprises drug manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, pharmacies, mail order services, long-term care facilities and hospitals in more than 100 countries. IMS tracks over one million products, obtaining data for 90 percent of all pharmaceutical sales in the U.S., and for 75 percent of all prescriptions written in its global information sphere. IMS' revenue was \$2.19 billion in 2007, a jump of 12 percent from 2006's \$1.95 billion.

The company's chief service categories are sales force effectiveness, aimed at boosting clients' productivity and territory management; portfolio optimization, an analysis of market opportunities and potential business growth; and launch and brand management, a broad offering involving support for client needs relative to market segmentation and positioning, life cycle management for prescription and other pharmaceutical products, and health economics and research.

Pre-prescriptions

The company was founded in 1954 by New York ad execs Ludwig Frohlich and David Dubow to conduct pharmaceutical market research. Intercontinental Marketing Services, as it was then known, would serve as a portal to the overseas market for the pair's advertising agency. In 1957, IMS produced its first research study, an audit of pharmaceutical sales in the West German market. Over the years, the company expanded across Europe, and also penetrated into Japan, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. It was not until 1969, when IMS was ahead of competitors in Europe and Asia, that a presence was established in the U.S. Davee, Koehnlein and Keating, a Chicago-based auditor of pharmaceutical sales, was acquired that year, and the following decades saw enormous growth through acquisitions, in the Americas and elsewhere.

IMS itself was acquired in 1988 for \$1.8 billion by Dun & Bradstreet. The new parent invested heavily in development of the company, and in 1996 spun off the business side of IMS as Cognizant Corporation, a publicly traded entity that included Nielsen Media Research, the famous TV tracker. Though Nielsen and IMS are amusingly parallel for their interest in the means by which people tranquilize themselves, they split apart in 1998, each with its own listing on the NYSE.

The firm's self-directed growth from that point was frenzied. In 1998, it acquired Walsh International, a pharmaceutical software company serving European markets. Going into the 21st century, market pushes were made into the previously untapped (or undertapped) regions of Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. In July 2004, IMS took control of Shanghai-based United Research China, greatly enhancing its coverage of the pharmaceutical market in Asia. That same year, in the first of several such deals with European pharmaceutical suppliers, the company drafted an agreement with British pharmacy chain Boots the Chemist that gave it access to sales data from 1,300 U.K. drugstores.

Staying the course

IMS, familiar with the need to refill a good prescription, continues to make acquisitions for growth and service enhancement. Most recently, in December 2007, the company purchased MIHS Holdings, Inc., a provider of analytics and technology services for health care data management initiatives. IMS management believes the new assets will strengthen managed market services for pharmaceutical clients, while also furthering value-added capabilities for health care payers. In March 2007, the company got its hands on ValueMedics Research LLC, a Virginia-based health care research and consulting firm. ValueMedics was attractive to IMS as a source of researched "proof points," i.e., evidence of the effectiveness of new drugs. Earlier, in December 2006, the firm broadened its existing services by acquiring the life sciences practice of Strategic Decisions Group, a California-based consulting firm focused on portfolio strategies in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries.

Adding tools to the box

Staying on top of the game means more than just acquisitions, however. IMS is engaged in work that requires sophisticated data collection through the use of software and other technology. As such, the firm continually makes efforts to develop new tools for use in its own market research, or as an offering to clients that will allow them to interpret data and results more easily and accurately.

In January 2008, IMS launched IMS Precision Compensation, a program that helps pharmaceutical companies measure sales force performance and gauge the proper compensation. The software, which sprang out of an alliance with Callidus Software, acts as an addition to the company's existing precision sales force suite. In November 2006, in a large-scale technology advancement, IMS integrated anonymized patient-level data (APLD) across its global portfolio of information, analytics and consulting offerings. This inclusion of APPLD allows a comparison of the effects over time, and reveals the intersecting influence of multiple treatment factors, such as disease patterns, patient compliance and persistence, physician practices and cost of care.

The power of information

IMS consultants are able to leverage the firm's vast market intelligence for client projects in a number of ways. They are able to segment a market by sales potential, isolating any possible idiosyncrasies of specific geographies, practice groups and prescribers. They are also able to report on physician attitudes toward direct-to-consumer marketing, e-detailing and other promotional activity. Using these parameters, the potential success of an upcoming drug launch becomes utterly predictable. Other organizations can be analyzed and tracked as well, frisked for strengths and weaknesses if a competitor, or vetted for acquisition or alliance if an attractive prospect.

For example, in a recent project for a major pharmaceutical company seeking to optimize its promotional budget, IMS examined details, samples, e-marketing and journal advertisements of the client's past promotions. Taking into account the prescription base of each of the client's brands, the firm was able to rebalance the company's spending (making adjustments to the degree of sampling versus advertising, for instance) to bring about an additional \$300 million in revenue on the same promotional budget.

Speed limit

In January 2007, IMS completed a study of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine (two components of the illegal drug methamphetamine) for the Drug Enforcement Administration. As part of the U.S. Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005, the DEA needed to establish production and importation quotas for substances that can be used in the manufacture of methamphetamine. IMS analyzed sales and use patterns by cross-referencing five different prescription drug information sources with over-the-counter sales data, and determined the quantity of the two chemicals needed for legitimate medical usage nationwide.

Side effects

With all that data at hand, the firm has been able to position itself as an authority in the pharmaceutical market, and a variety of media outlets and trade associations call on IMS to share its insight and expertise. Company representatives frequently make speaking appearances at events around the world, such as the JP Morgan Annual Healthcare Conference, the UBS Global Healthcare Services Conference and the Goldman Sachs Global Healthcare Conference. CEO David Carlucci was asked in September 2007 to contribute an essay to *Forbes'* web site expressing his opinions on the state of health care public policy. Just one year earlier, *Forbes* had published IMS' list of the top-20 best-selling drugs in the U.S.

GETTING HIRED

The way in

It typically takes two or three rounds of interviews to make it into IMS. The first round consists of a "45-minute phone interview," which includes a case question. The "second round is in the office" and includes three interviews: an "experience" interview, an "ad-hoc case"

and “one formal case presentation,” in which “the candidate is given a case written on paper and must present the findings.” A senior consultant shares, “Our formal case is always health care-specific, while the informal case typically is not.” The interviews are “followed usually by lunch, so that the candidates have a chance to meet a reasonable cross-section of consultants (by level) during the process.” Finally, a third round is largely limited to MBAs, but may involve “two to three interviews with the senior management.”

A higher-up reports, “While we don’t have the capacity to interview on campus at more than around eight schools, we welcome all resumes from other schools. In addition, we are often involved with career fairs and other on-campus activities such as conferences, panels and lectures. We recruit significantly at both the undergrad and MBA level.” Currently, the firm also has “two MBA interns and one undergrad intern who came through a similar process.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Going the extra mile

We’re told that the atmosphere at IMS Health is “eclectic,” “progressive,” “flexible” “collegiate” and “entrepreneurial.” Insiders add that their colleagues are “friendly,” “diverse,” “intelligent,” “energetic” and “motivated.” They are also “young,” and one staffer warns that the “junior folks,” in particular, are “somewhat high-schoolish”—apt, it would seem, at a small firm where “everyone knows everyone.” But from another perspective, a recent hire simply says his colleagues are “laid-back,” and “are willing to share and have fun in the office!” Others describe the culture as “work very hard and play hard.” One reports, “We work hard, sometimes too hard, but we have great deliverables and celebrate with project dinners at some of Manhattan’s best.” Another agrees, “It’s a culture where people don’t take themselves very seriously, but when it comes to the project work, everyone goes the extra mile.”

Close quarters

In all, says a senior consultant, “there is a great camaraderie in the office that is fostered by everything from monthly birthday celebrations to gift exchanges at holiday time.” The office environment also helps engender team spirit, since, “it’s open seating, meaning we don’t really have cubes, per se, and no assigned seating. That means that all people of all levels sit anywhere they want each day. So all senior people are completely mixed in with the junior members.” That being said, a longtimer warns, “We still occasionally fight for seats and conference rooms on days where most of the consultants are in the office; this lack of space is expected to get more challenging with the incoming class of new hires in summer 2008.”

Downward dog at the office

“Telecommuting is widely accepted,” which likely helps alleviate the space crunch. Staffers insist that IMS is “not at all interested in face time,” and “as long as one gets the work done, that’s all that matters.” We’re told that “all managers expect everyone to have a personal life,” and most staffers have “the flexibility to work from home on the occasional Friday or if personal requirements come up.” In fact, raves an executive, “The best thing about working here is that I have almost obscene flexibility over my schedule and priorities; as such, I seldom wake up dreading the workday because it is as good as what I decide to create for myself.” An analyst agrees, “No one is monitoring what time you get in, and no one makes you stay till a certain hour for no reason if you don’t have work.” By and large, he adds, “people in the office are very understanding if you need to come in late because of a doctor’s appointment or need to work from home because workmen are going to your apartment.” And if the flexibility isn’t enough to ease staffers’ stress, there’s also “yoga in the office.”

Although some say “there are times and seasons when people are double- or triple-staffed on projects,” most staffers report hours of around 45 to 55 per week—a number that can climb to 70 a week for higher-ups. Still, longer hours tend to mean later nights rather than weekend work. A vice president shares, “Our general view is that individuals own their weekends, not us, though we may need to borrow them occasionally.” Then again, warns an engagement manager, consultants should “expect occasional weekend work, especially as you become more senior and have business development targets to meet.” A senior consultant adds,

“I rarely have a weekend where I do absolutely no work, but I also rarely have weekends where I do more than about four hours of work.” We’re also told “vacation time is important, and we all generally respect that.”

Occasional road trips

When it comes to travel, staffers insist, “We do not work at the client site four days a week like many other strategy/management consulting firms.” Instead, “the model here is to travel only when needed”—junior staffers, in particular, face “limited travel.” Recent hires report spending just “one day per month” on the road, which makes trips more “enjoyable.” An insider explains, “Generally, we may take a car to a client for major presentations one to two times a month.” In addition, “some projects include more exotic travel to Europe, depending on the size and type of project (this is generally a perk rather than a concern, and most of us are jealous of those who get to jet set across the Atlantic).” Others agree that “although most of our work is U.S.-focused,” it’s also the case that “every few months, more experienced analysts might be able to travel on a project for a few days to Europe, or a week or two to an emerging market country (China, India, Brazil).”

Above the “principal level,” more travel is typically involved; as one consultant puts it, “Senior folks are not in the office much, due to client travel.” As a result, he states, it can be difficult for junior staff to get to know their superiors, and adds that not being on the road at his level makes for “very little, if any, interaction with a client’s senior management.” An engagement manager agrees: “Unfortunately, many of the most senior staff (VPs and senior principals) travel or work outside of the office a lot, so there is less senior-level interaction than in past years.”

Super supervisors—if they’re around

But most staffers say they have plenty of time to bond with higher-ups, and lots of opportunities to mingle with clients. A principal explains that the different experiences may stem from the fact that “principal-level travel is highly varied, depending on personal preference and situation.” So “some senior members [are] on the road at different clients every day of the week,” while others “tend to stay closer to home due to personal priorities.”

On the more enthusiastic side of things, one consultant remarks, “I feel I have a great relationship with my superiors. I am comfortable asking them for help on projects when I need it. They are always open to offering a helping hand.” He continues, “I am very satisfied with amount of interaction I have with clients. I have only been out of college for a couple of years, but have had the opportunity to present to clients many times in various forums.” Another young staffer says he has a “very open relationship with managers,” and is “very satisfied with the opportunities given me to interact with clients.” A colleague is even more optimistic, claiming that IMS is “a great place to get a start in the working world with constant access to senior management and trial-by-fire client contact and presentations.” He notes, “We have a very unique opportunity to take lead roles when it comes to client management and presentation. The level of interaction I have is unheard of at many larger firms.” A higher-up agrees, “Our consultants at all ranks are highly encouraged to present at client meetings of all types; of course, the usual exceptions apply around specific client preferences.” And an analyst remarks, “You will work very closely with your direct manager and even with senior people two to three levels above. You basically control how well you want them to get to know you. There are also many opportunities for new analysts to interact and present to clients.”

On the other hand, a senior consultant qualifies, “We do not interact with top-level management at our clients regularly. Typically, our interaction is at the brand team level or with market analytics, pricing and market access teams. In some cases more senior management will be invited to learn about project outcomes, but this is the exception, not the norm.”

Light hours, low salaries

Perhaps as a trade-off for decent hours and light travel, IMS compensation doesn’t stack up. Insiders complain that the “pay is on the lower end of the industry spectrum,” and say there is “room to improve.” An experienced hire remarks, “We come up a little short on compensation with respect to our competition, and this does create some unhappiness. Raises, promotion increases and bonuses are below what one might hope for.” The problem seems to be across all levels: At the “post-undergrad and post-MBA levels,” we’re told, “compensation is similar to boutique firms, lower than name-brand firms.” And since the firm “is not a partnership,” salaries leave something to be desired, even at the principal level.

Still, a vice president insists, “everybody moans about compensation, but our overall deal (base salary, bonuses, stock, benefits, vacation, work culture, etc.) is competitive.” And a recent hire agrees, “While I know our firm pays less than the average top-five management consulting firm, every bit of it is worth it, given that we do not travel.”

Support your school

In perks, insiders report that “stock grants are awarded as part of a merit-based bonus (in addition to a cash bonus).” Additionally, IMS holds “a large number of team bonding activities,” including “one to two happy hours a month,” “karaoke nights,” “white water rafting,” “team-building dinners at the nicest (and most expensive) restaurants in New York City,” and “summer and Christmas parties at fancy places.” Because there are “lots of activities,” one analyst remarks that there is a “great social life” at the firm.

Respondents say “lunches and desserts are common in the office,” and “there are always great snacks in the kitchen and an unending supply of beverages and sodas.” There’s also “a gym discount at a couple of local gyms, where the initiation fee is waived.” For those staffers who are especially loyal to their alma maters, IMS “will not only match, but give \$2 for every \$1 you donate to your college/university.” IMS isn’t as proactive in sharing the wealth with the community at large, though—a senior consultant notes, “We have incorporated some community service and charity fund raising into our culture, but this needs to be beefed up quite a bit, in my opinion.”

A recent hire notes, also, that IMS generously “pays for our BlackBerries and lets us make personal use of them.” With that mobility, warns an analyst, “you might be able to leave the office at 4 p.m. one day, but it’s culturally expected that you’ll return e-mails in a timely fashion at any time of the day/night during the week.” He adds, “Checking the BlackBerry constantly is a 24 hour per day responsibility during the week. The weekends are different in the sense that you aren’t completely obligated to respond to e-mails.”

Constructive criticism

Staffers agree that there is “no up-or-out” policy at IMS, but differ on exactly how promotions occur. One consultant explains that “promotion review is held annually,” and says it “typically takes three years to advance.” Another reports that “reviews are done every six months, when you can apply for promotion with the support of your career development coach,” adding, “Analysts often move up to consultant in one-and-a-half to two years after joining the firm.”

A colleague, however, claims the firm simply “doesn’t seem to have a clear promotion policy; advancement seems to be ad hoc.” He goes on to say that there’s an “unclear career growth path, with limited guidance and support from senior management, especially if you want to build a career within the practice.” Perhaps as a result, he adds that there is a “high turnover” rate. But others insist that whatever the time frame, promotions take place “on a merit-based system.” A senior consultant notes that, “in fact, if you are not promoted within the expected time frame of your position, then much feedback is provided in how you can improve to get promoted during the next six-month review. If you follow those recommendations, they will promote you. This firm rarely fires anyone.” Another comments, “Feedback is typically given constructively, so I have rarely felt that I’m being reprimanded, but more that I’m continuously learning and advancing my career.”

One consultant reports that “most people end up going to get their [graduate degrees] at top schools after a few years with the firm,” although a colleague explains that “people can advance with or without an advanced degree.”

Learn by doing

Within IMS, any “formal training” comes strictly “at the beginning of employment,” and predominantly consists of a “consultant-led, two-week immersion orientation.” From then on, training tends to be on the job, although “there are training resources online or on site at the headquarters.” In addition, “each consultant has a development coach who is approximately two levels above him.” Special accommodations are sometimes made to help staffers find their niche: A principal tells us the firm paid for her to see “an independent career counselor,” which she says “was enlightening in unearthing my professional interests/dislikes and strengths/weaknesses.”

Definitely diverse

Despite IMS Health's small size, staffers say, "we are an extremely diverse office with employees of multiple nationalities (South Africa, India, China, Ghana, etc.), as well as sexual orientation." In all, there's a "good representation of women and minorities." A higher-up attests, "We are wholly and completely diverse; it's not even a question. The fact that I have not questioned this over the past four years (and I am a single, ethnic minority female in a senior position) should demonstrate how different and special we are in this dimension."



GO FOR THE GOLD

Get Vault Gold Membership for access to all of Vault's award-winning career information.

- **Employee surveys for 7,000+ top employers**, with insider info on
 - Company culture
 - Salaries and compensation
 - Hiring process and interviews
 - Business outlook
- Access to **1,000+ extended insider employer snapshots**
- Access to **Vault's Salary Central**, with salary information for law, finance, and consulting firms
- **Student and alumni surveys** for 100s of top MBA programs, law schools and graduate school programs, as well as 1,000s of undergraduate programs
- Access to **complete Vault message board archives**

15% OFF all Vault purchases, including Vault Guides, and Vault Career Services (named the Wall Street Journal's "Top Choice" for resume makeovers)

VAULT

> the most trusted name in career information™

For more information go to
www.vault.com



TOP

**THE
BEST OF THE
REST**

CONSULTING
FIRMS

Abt Associates Inc.

55 Wheeler Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: (617) 492-7100
Fax: (617) 492-5219
www.abtassociates.com

LOCATIONS

Cambridge, MA (HQ)

Atlanta, GA
Bethesda, MD
Durham, NC
Lexington, MA (Abt Bio-Pharma Solutions, Inc.)
New York, NY (Abt SRBI)

PRACTICE AREAS

Behavioral Health • Biometrics & Clinical Operations • Child & Family • Education • Environment & Resources • Health Economic Research & Quality of Life Evaluation Services (HERQuLES) • Health Market Research & Consulting • Health Policy • Health Systems, HIV/AIDS & Infectious Diseases • Housing • International Economic Growth • Public Health & Epidemiology • Registries • Reproductive, Maternal & Child Health • Survey Research • Workforce & Civic Renewal

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: John A. Shane
CEO & President: Wendell J. Knox
2008 Employees: 1,251
2007 Employees: 1,023
2008 Revenue: \$225 million
2007 Revenue: \$199 million



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Great public policy firm"
- "Dull research shop"
- "Family-friendly"
- "Sales-focused"

UPPER

- Potential to share ownership in the firm

DOWNER

- Some office locations aren't very cosmopolitan

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Go to the Careers tab of the company's web site

THE SCOOP

In the service of change

Abt Associates is a research and consulting firm with a unique focus on issues of social, economic and health policy, international development, business research and consulting, and clinical trials and registries. The company provides services such as policy analysis, economic evaluation, research, medical science and strategy planning. Clients include the U.S. government at all levels, international organizations, businesses and nonprofit foundations and institutions.

The Cambridge, Mass.-based company operates for profit, but nonetheless has had a hand in the creation or shaping of a number of public programs in the U.S., including welfare reform, Medicaid, Head Start, statistical tracking of crime and low-income housing projects. Recent domestic engagements include overseeing a \$150 million urban redevelopment project in Memphis, Tenn., monitoring human clinical trials for AIDS vaccines and an evaluation for the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Educational Sciences of the federal Reading First Program, as well as continued work for the Environmental Protection Agency.

The company has also assisted governments worldwide in the implementation of programs and policy reforms during transition from command economies to market-oriented economies. In collaboration with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Abt Associates' experts in agriculture, health, the environment and trade have advised foreign governments on service delivery and sustainable market-based reforms. In a recent project for USAID's flagship project, Private Sector Partnerships One, the firm developed a framework for helping donors and program implementers identify funding priorities and strategies for long-term sustainability. It also launched, a USAID project in Pakistan in February 2007. The Safe Drinking Water and Hygiene Promotion project will assist the Pakistani government in its efforts to increase accessibility to safe drinking water in 31 selected districts of the country. The project initiatives will focus on hygiene and sanitation practices training, operation and maintenance of treatment facilities, and water quality testing.

Still involved in guidance, but with fewer fiery explosions

Engineer Clark Abt started the firm in January 1965 after leaving Raytheon, a defense contractor and the world's largest producer of guided missiles. His founding vision for the consultancy was one of enlightened problem solving through the application of interdisciplinary social sciences and systems analysis to government and commercial issues. Though it started in a small office above a machine shop, the firm today can boast of over 1,000 consultants in multiple U.S. locations. It also maintains over 40 project sites in 30 countries. The American Marketing Association ranked Abt Associates No. 19 among the top-50 domestic market research firms in 2007, and No. 23 among global research firms. It was also recognized that year as the top workplace for work/life balance in *Consulting* magazine's survey of the best firms to work for.

A look at the roster

A closer look at the Abt staff who enjoy this balance reveals a paper trail of diplomas. Of the firm's employees, 70 percent carry an advanced degree, including 26 percent with PhDs or MDs. Their fields of study are distributed across many disciplines, although the social sciences make up the lion's share at 39 percent of all degrees. Law, medicine and other professional degrees account for 25 percent; economics 13 percent; the natural sciences and engineering 10 percent; business management 8 percent; and the humanities bring up the rear with 5 percent. Incidentally, this means the owners of Abt Associates are a well-educated bunch too—99 percent of the private stock of the firm is held by its employees.

A new addition

In 2007, Abt Associates acquired the strategy and research firm SRBI (Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc.). Headquartered in New York City, the subsidiary, now known as Abt SRBI, is led by President and CEO Mark A. Schulman. The purchase boosts the firm's existing research capabilities, especially in the realm of primary data collection. Abt SRBI's services include designing, conducting, analyzing and reporting public opinion, public policy and market research surveys.

Helping them help themselves

Continuing Abt Associates' involvement with public programs, in November 2007, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) awarded the firm a \$15 million, seven-year contract to lead an evaluation of employment and self-sufficiency programs. The programs, devised by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the ACF, will target current and former recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits, as well as families on the verge of receiving such benefits. The project, known as Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self-sufficiency, or ISIS, will study the effectiveness of these new programs, which represent the next generation of attempts at promoting employment and self-sufficiency.

Abt Associates is also conducting a study for Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, analyzing the impact of government housing vouchers on families receiving welfare. This analysis expands upon a previous examination of the voucher program conducted for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The purpose of the study is to gain further insight into how housing assistance impacts a range of social, economic and quality-of-life issues for recipient families. The information will be used by Harvard's Joint Center as well as policy-makers to guide the design and targeting of mobility counseling programs.

Not all talk

In support of its business, and in the interest of social science itself, the firm's consultants frequently publish articles and reports, as well as two internally produced newsletters. Published articles in 2008 include "A Retrospective Managed Care Claims Data Analysis of Medication Adherence to Vaginal Estrogen Therapy: Implications for Clinical Practice," a multicontributor effort published in the *Journal of Women's Health*; Stéphane Ganassali's "The Influence of the Design of Web Survey Questionnaires on the Quality of Responses," published in *Survey Research Methods*; and "A Comparison of Address-Based Sampling (ABS) Versus Random-Digit-Dialing (RDD) for General Population Surveys," another collaborative effort published in *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

One of the firm's newsletters, *Abstracts*, presents an overview of current and noteworthy projects as detailed by company thought leaders. Pieces touch on the essentials of a given study or company activity in terms easily comprehended by an informed but nonexpert audience. Each issue also features sidebar profiles of the project masterminds, and a resources section listing related publications and materials from Abt Associates. The second newsletter, *International Perspectives*, is a quarterly update on the firm's international endeavors.

GETTING HIRED

Dedicated to degrees

A plethora of information about careers at Abt Associates is conveniently located on its web site. The firm provides extensive descriptions of the various positions available in its technical consulting practice, from entry-level research assistants through to principals. Staffers are able to move up through the ranks at the junior level with just a bachelor's degree, but there's little question that getting to the top requires some serious schooling. Profiles of nearly a dozen employees are also included on the site, and most of them boast multiple higher degrees.

For those who fit the bill, the site's employment opportunities page includes options for viewing all open positions or searching by keyword, location and job category. If nothing of interest pops up, candidates can create a "job search agent," which sends an e-mail notification when the right match becomes available. Each listing specifies the position's educational and experiential qualifications, responsibilities and skills prerequisites. Applying online requires creating a profile and uploading a resume, and once an application has been submitted, it is stored in the firm's database for "a reasonable amount of time." So if the fit isn't right the first time, there's still hope.

Supporting its staffers

Abt Associates claims to offer “comprehensive employee benefits” to those who do make it into the firm, and a glance at its benefits site suggests it follows through. In addition to “three weeks’ paid vacation,” “nine paid holidays” and a “public transportation subsidy,” the firm offers extensive “health and welfare” benefits, retirement programs and time-off provisions. Specifics include “medical coverage,” “business travel accident insurance,” “discounted automobile and homeowners’/renters’ insurance,” a “401(k) profit-sharing and savings plan” and an “employee stock ownership plan,” not to mention maternity, paternity, bereavement and military reserve leave.

The assistance doesn’t stop there: the firm provides a number of professional development programs to keep its staff up to snuff. New hires start off with a “comprehensive orientation program” and are linked with an experienced buddy through a formal mentoring program. All employees can get words of wisdom from lecturers at “town hall Thursdays” and “tech talk Tuesdays,” and can share their own knowledge at professional conferences with funding from “technical dissemination grants.” There are also plenty of courses, workshops and training seminars to choose from, as well as “affinity groups” and “journal clubs” to join. If all that’s not enough, Abt Associates also offers tuition reimbursement.

Bainbridge, Inc.

4275 Executive Square
Suite 850
La Jolla, CA 92037
Phone: (858) 638-1800
Fax: (858) 638-1809
www.bainbridge.com

LOCATIONS

San Diego, CA (HQ)

Boston, MA
Carson City, NV
Dallas, TX
New York, NY
San Francisco, CA

PRACTICE AREAS

Capital Advisory

Acquisition Search & Deal Flow Development
Due Diligence
Integration Advisory
Market Feasibility Studies
Negotiation Strategy
Organizational Assessments
Sell-Side Advisory
Valuation

Management Consulting

Benchmarking
Customer Relationship Management
Higher Education
Market Analysis
Strategy

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Principal & Director: Carlos Arias

2008 Employees: 50

2007 Employees: 40

UPPER

- Many opportunities for advancement

DOWNER

- Lack of name recognition at the national level

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.bainbridge.com/index.php/careers

THE SCOOP

Consult by numbers

Bainbridge, a management consulting and capital advisory firm headquartered in San Diego, maintains a unique hybrid approach to consulting that combines strategy and finance, putting it on the professional services spectrum somewhere between a traditional consultancy and an investment bank. The company assists Fortune 1000 companies, private equity groups and startups with market analysis and research, customer relationship management, effective negotiation, mergers and acquisitions, and organizational performance, and also offers internally developed proprietary services, like Customer Account Vulnerability Assessment and BenchMark.

The firm was founded in 1975 by Boulton Bainbridge Miller, PhD, a professor, consultant and author. Originally based in Illinois (though it now bears no Midwestern footprint), the company was intended as a publishing and consulting arm for its founder's research. It evolved into its current state through the accumulated participation of business and economics professors, attorneys, investment bankers and management consultants who joined the organization over the decades. Today, in addition to San Diego, Bainbridge has offices in Boston, Carson City, Dallas, New York and San Francisco.

Staying with the customer and ahead of the competition

Bainbridge's Customer Account Vulnerability Assessment (CAVA) service is meant to be used by sales and marketing teams, or other individuals and groups who interact with or focus on customer-side business. CAVA performs one-on-one interviews with existing and potential customers, then assesses and packages those customers' opinions, purchasing selection criteria, price and quality sensitivities, and requirements for switching vendors. The resulting reports can be used to hone strategies, win new accounts and maximize sales effectiveness, not to mention to enhance customer satisfaction.

The firm's other proprietary service, BenchMark, provides detailed metrics on the operations, performance levels, strategies and expenses of outside institutions, whether they be rivals within the sector or a best-in-class company from another industry that has been deemed worthy of emulation. In such cases, Bainbridge assists clients in integrating newly discovered processes and techniques into their own business.

Buying, selling or just looking

The firm's capital advisory services are aimed at identifying, structuring and seeing to completion public and private transactions for corporations, financial institutions and even, where appropriate, high-net-worth individuals. It researches and analyzes potential acquisition targets, coaches for or conducts actual negotiation, and performs valuation and due diligence services. From the other end of the boardroom table, Bainbridge offers sell-side advisory, ensuring that clients who must sell their business experience a timely and favorable closing. In such cases, the firm runs through the entire life cycle of the transaction, addressing strategy development, valuation, market identification, marketing, negotiation and, finally, execution.

Sporting a new service

In March 2008, Bainbridge announced the launch of a new offering: professional athlete due diligence. The service investigates the character and track record of a potential addition to the roster, applying research methodology to determine, as it would with inanimate investments, whether a long-term contract is advisable. This sort of due diligence, essentially a secondary, deeper level of scouting, could enable sporting teams to avoid the costly, embarrassing and, in some cases, performance-crippling recruitment of talented athletes who later prove to be unstable or unreliable.

Also in March, Bainbridge introduced the higher education research and consulting practice, a set of offerings that build on and expand its existing services aimed at educational institutions, especially colleges and universities. The new practice advises on

strategic branding, market and industry analysis, competitor intelligence, internal assessment and organizational implementation, stakeholder analysis, benchmarking and best practices.

Local favorite

In March 2007, Bainbridge received a *San Diego Business Journal* Best Places to Work in San Diego award in the small business category. The awards are given out on the recommendations of an independent panel of judges, which then spends five months evaluating nominated organizations in the areas of internal culture, mission statement, diversity and employee benefits.

GETTING HIRED

Straight to the point

Bainbridge keeps the career information on its web site short and sweet. On a single page, the firm lists openings in its La Jolla office, which, as of this writing, included positions such as business development associate and director/junior general partner, private equity. Clicking on each position will provide interested parties with further information, including job responsibilities and prerequisites.

Bainbridge requests that individuals apply by submitting their contact information and resume through an online form. Catch-all applications are not accepted; instead, applicants must specify the specific position for which they are applying. For certain openings, applicants are also asked to respond to a number of screening questions (in lieu of a cover letter), such as, “Why are you applying for this position at Bainbridge?” and “What skills can you bring to our organization?”

Bates White

1300 Eye Street, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 408-6110
Fax: (202) 408-7838
www.bateswhite.com

LOCATIONS

Washington, DC (HQ)
San Diego, CA

PRACTICE AREAS

Antitrust
Commercial Litigation
Communications
Consumer Finance
Corporate Finance
Energy
Environmental & Product Liability
European Competition
Health Care
Intellectual Property
International Arbitration
Labor & Employment

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
President & Senior Partner: Charles E. Bates
Managing Partner: Matthew E. Raiff
2008 Employees: 170 +
2007 Employees: 150 +



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Academics"
- "Needlessly complex"
- "They are growing"
- "Boring work"

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #4 – Travel Requirements
- #11 – Compensation
- #20 – Formal Training

Diversity

- #12 – Diversity for GLBT
- #15 – Best Firms for Diversity
- #15 – Diversity for Minorities
- #18 – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- "Emphasizes and supports working across practices"
- "Academic environment (the good aspects of academia)"
- Overtime pay for consultants below the manager level
- "Strong support for new entrepreneurial initiatives"

DOWNERS

- "Not a household name ... yet"
- "Economic consulting has fewer opportunities for client interaction compared to management consulting"
- Most projects are domestic
- "The job schedule is often dictated by judges and lawyers"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.bateswhite.com/careers/careers.htm

THE SCOOP

The sum of diverse parts

Bates White is a relatively small, two-office consulting operation that specializes in economics, finance and business strategy. The company's professional staff—among them economists, econometricians, financial analysts and IT specialists—provide law firms, corporations and government entities with economic analysis to help address complex litigation and business challenges.

Bates White is uniquely focused on the cultivation of diversity within its ranks. In the first decade since its founding in 1999, the firm has established a diversity/inclusion council that tests, implements and evaluates initiatives aimed at the heterogeneous broadening of its staff and corporate culture, and ensures that all employees, regardless of their differences, have opportunities to learn, develop and contribute to the firm's success. Employees come from an array of ethnicities and backgrounds, having been recruited from many different institutions and an alphabet soup of academic fields, including biology, business administration, economics, English, engineering, finance, mathematics, philosophy, physics and statistics. Their linguistic capabilities include Bengali, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish and Turkish.

Primo pedigree

Co-founders Charles Bates and Halbert White set the bar as high for excellence as they do for diversity. Bates, president of the firm and a senior partner, was formerly a vice president at A.T. Kearney, and prior to that served as a partner at KPMG, overseeing the economic analysis group. He led the firm's 1999 team working on behalf of class plaintiffs in the largest price fixing case in U.S. history, *In re Vitamins Antitrust Litigation*. Bates and his team proved that vitamin manufacturers conspired throughout the 1990s to inflate product prices.

White, the firm's chief scientist, carries an equally distinguished, though more rigorously academic, background. Also a professor of economics at the University of California at San Diego, his works of scholarship include more than 100 articles and books. Known for his work in econometrics, predictive modeling and artificial neural networks, White has merited inclusion in *Who's Who in the World*. He is, additionally, a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a Guggenheim Fellow and a fellow of the Econometric Society. As an economic theorist, White has achieved a level of notoriety that borders on ubiquity—based on a September 2006 citation analysis of peer-reviewed economics literature, a paper that White had published in 1980 emerged in 4,318 citations, making it the most referenced work on economics in the last 35 years.

Experts at antitrust

The vitamin antitrust case was not just a feather in the company's cap—it was an early foray into what has become Bates White's strongest practice area. The firm's squad of antitrust professionals, on which there are more than 30 PhDs, advises clients on case development and strategy, evaluating economic arguments with regard to evidence and analyzing the likelihood of litigation or settlement. Despite having been in business less than 10 years, the firm has been involved in some of the highest-profile antitrust cases in history, tackling and, in some cases, helping to define issues of monopolization, cartel activity, pricing, damages and liability, class certification, mergers and acquisitions and competition suppression.

In January 2008, Bates White had a hand in The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company's (better known as A&P) successful acquisition of Pathmark Stores, Inc., for \$1.4 billion. The firm's team, led by White himself, worked with the law firm Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider and executives at A&P to construct a data set and analyze the antitrust issues related to the acquisition. Similar to analyses performed for mergers in Staples and Whole Foods, Bates White consultants used advanced econometric techniques to analyze the shift in gross margins, prices and dollar sales subsequent to entry and exit events within a single geographic area. Ultimately, the Federal Trade Commission ruled that A&P would have to divest six of Pathmark's 141 stores, a significant victory in light of industry predictions that pointed to a divestiture of up to 30 stores.

Asbestos assessment

Another practice area where Bates White has secured a powerful reputation is environmental and product liability, largely from its work on asbestos risk assessment. The firm has estimated the degree of asbestos liability for clients in a surprising range of industries, including car parts manufacturers, banks and real estate companies. In 2005, the American Legislative Exchange Council, a nonprofit organization peopled mostly by conservative state legislators and policy advocates, called on the firm for an analysis of the potential cost of asbestos claims over the next 50 years. The contract was in reaction to the proposed Fairness in Asbestos Injury Resolution (FAIR) Act, which would have established a \$140 billion trust fund for the compensation of asbestos victims. Bates White's estimate of \$300 to \$695 billion in liability, indicating an enormous shortfall by the trust fund, contributed to a decision by Congress to reject the FAIR Act.

Charles Bates, who heads the environmental and product liability team, is considered one of the foremost thinkers on asbestos liability. In December 2006, he was featured in a panel discussion on estimations of asbestos claims at Mealey's Asbestos Bankruptcy Conference, and in November that year, he was the keynote speaker at Mealey's International Asbestos Conference in London. Charles Mullin, another member of the company's team, spoke at the American Conference Institute's 7th National Asbestos Claims Conference in June 2006. The two men also collaborated, in December 2007, on a paper called "Show Me the Money," which argued that the sums being reported in mesothelioma (an asbestos-related cancer) claims were inflated, and that the true numbers for total recovery in those cases are not available.

GETTING HIRED

Campus recruiting is the best way in

Although Bates White offers the opportunity for interested parties to apply for jobs through its web site, some insiders say "it is difficult to get hired outside of the undergraduate recruiting process unless you have been referred by someone with connections to the firm." Still, a senior consultant notes that the firm does "hire outside the academic cycle—especially for senior hires—including individuals leaving government or academia and individuals who have worked at other consulting firms. The firm also hires those with nontraditional degrees (generally in mathematics or science)."

Bates White's "very tough and rigorous recruiting" efforts focus on a selection of the "top-50 schools" in the U.S., although the specific list "tends to change from one year to another" (plus, a partner says the firm is "receptive to applications from any school"). Qualified college candidates have an initial on-campus interview that is "mostly about background and experiences," but may also include "a small case." Those who advance to the second round are flown in for a "full day of back-to-back interviews" on site. A recent hire breaks it down: "This usually includes an interview with two managers, two case question sessions, an interview with a consultant and a lunch interview with two consultants." Another adds, "The cases can be rigorous at times, but they are still pretty relaxed compared to other consulting firms. The cases revolve around current client work, so it is hard to expect any standard scenarios or questions. If you are smart and can think your way through an analytical problem, you should be fine."

Yes, that White

The firm also "targets top PhD candidates graduating from top programs in economics." For these candidates, a senior consultant explains, "first-round interviews are held at annual American Economics Association meetings. Second-round interviews are held on site at our office in D.C. The second round involves a series of interviews and the delivery of the candidate's job talk seminar."

Because the firm's focus is economic consulting, it may be worth keeping in mind that the "White's test that every econometrics 101 student learns to test for constant variance of residuals in regression analysis is the same White as in Bates White."

Summer fun

Summer internships at Bates White are well structured and give a good sense of what life is like at the firm. “At the beginning,” recalls a former intern, “there was a great deal of training, meant to orient interns to the consulting profession.” Then, he continues, “we were staffed onto projects and given hands-on experience similar to responsibilities I would later assume as a full-time employee.” Another notes that internships aren’t all work and no play, stating, “In addition to doing meaningful work that would be typical of a new full-time consultant, there was also a series of other events to familiarize me with the firm as a whole,” including “several social events” such as “sailing and attending a baseball game.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

High-brow and team-oriented

“Bates White is a very intellectual place,” insiders say. “We have a lot of PhDs, which creates a great, collegial environment to work in.” “I feel like I’m on a faculty, rather than staff,” a recent hire claims. A colleague adds, “Employees are quirky in their own way, but everyone is so intelligent and work is kept light-hearted so that the office is enjoyable.”

The academic environment also fosters a focus on teamwork. The firm is “extremely collaborative,” and “people are willing to go out of their way to help you with theoretical or practical questions.” A recent hire explains, “There is a real team environment here and people are happy to help each other out. You never feel like you’re on an island by yourself.” Others agree that “no one lives in an ivory tower,” and “there is almost never a sense of competition among employees.” A staffer adds, “People are pleased to hear creative ideas and potential issues with proposed approaches.” “Mutual respect is the foundation of working relationships, and employees are encouraged to express opinions and expected to contribute intellectually,” a co-worker agrees. That being said, another staffer warns, “sometimes it can be hard to have your voice heard in the din, given how vocal some of the people here can be.”

Team spirit

Given all the focus on learning, it’s perhaps no surprise that the firm can “be quite intense at times.” But Bates White “is very young and hip as well,” with “a lot of opportunities to socialize outside work” to ease the tension, including “happy hours, game nights, etc.” In general, we’re told, “the firm supports, both financially and otherwise, organizations that promote employee interaction and recreation, such as basketball and ultimate frisbee teams.” Plus, a senior source interjects, “we really like one another.”

Some longtimers who have watched the firm expand warn that it “no longer has the small-firm appeal,” and add that the culture is “moving toward individuals working autonomously, rather than as a firm.” But few recent hires seem to pick up on these issues, and one staffer who’s been at the firm for nearly five years believes “we have done a good job of protecting the collaborative spirit of the firm while growing from 50 to 150 people.”

Flexibility helps with balance ...

Despite the sports teams and happy hours, opinions are mixed on whether there’s enough of a work/life balance at the firm. Many staffers say that the “flexible working environment” is the key to balance. A project coordinator explains that employees “can form their own schedule—working weekdays, weekends, nights or days”—that is, “you can work your own schedule outside of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.” A manager continues, “It is not uncommon to arrive late/leave early/work from home, if need be,” and working at home is made easier since “every employee has a laptop and there is an infrastructure set up to access network resources and systems from the Web.” “I have been able to keep up my hobbies and take evening classes,” a new hire attests. “There are always pre-deadline spikes in litigation consulting,” he continues, “but it’s usually possible to plan for them.”

Perks are also provided to ease the load, explains a senior consultant: “They evaluate employees’ needs frequently and adjust to them accordingly.” For example, in a particularly high-stress period “when a bunch of projects all went crazy at once and people had to put in massive overtime, the firm brought in three meals a day and hired a concierge to reduce the burden.” In addition, Bates White “recognized the hardship with a spot bonus paid out to many members of the firm.”

... but work comes first

Others insist that the reason colleagues are so chummy is because “many employees’ primary social circle is developed at work,” since “it is difficult to balance a social life outside of work.” According to a senior consultant, “Although the firm makes a good faith effort to honor employees’ plans and schedules outside of work, it is almost expected that when a client or superior requests something at 6 p.m., you will cancel any plans you had that night and stay until it is finished.” A manager notes, “In addition to the high hours, workload is highly unpredictable here. This is an even worse problem because it makes it hard to make plans, take vacations, etc.”

A focus on 50

Whatever the perception may be, the vast majority of respondents report workweeks of 50 to 55 hours. And, in fact, “the expectation at Bates White is that everyone will work 50 hours a week on average.” We are told the hours “can jump to 60 or even 70 at some times,” but “the firm does try to give people who work much more than 50 hours a lighter assignment after they complete the very busy assignment.” Some claim that being surrounded by eager beavers doesn’t help the situation. One consultant comments, “I am surrounded by highly enthusiastic and very hardworking people who are constantly willing to take on more work and work longer hours,” adding, “It is very easy to end up with very little time left for personal life.” Another agrees that “there is a general feeling that even more than 50 hours is expected. It is not so much the firm that creates this environment, but the other employees.”

The owners are down the hall

If the workload seems high, it’s mainly because the firm is “committed to excellence.” A manager insists, “Everything we do goes through massive quality control and is held to the highest standards.” A principal adds, “The senior management are very ambitious and really want to create a great firm.” At the same time, “partners are approachable and eager to discuss projects with junior staff.” A senior source notes that because the firm is privately owned, “we are not beholden to an independent board or shareholders. The firm’s owners sit down the hall and their doors are open.” A recent hire raves, “On the first week of work, one of the founders stopped by my office and personally welcomed me to the firm. I do not know of any other firms that are as welcoming or nonhierarchical.”

And everyone’s encouraged to pitch in. Another newbie reports, “I have been with the firm for only a couple of months now, but I have already had an opportunity to work with one of the founders on a significant project.” Others concur: “Opinions from junior employees are considered, and they are treated like integral members of the team.” “The firm places a lot of trust in its employees, and relies on even entry-level people to do very important work and interact with clients.” Of course, experiences vary and not every situation is positive. As one senior consultant remarks, “Many of the superiors are very friendly and understanding, and allow consultants the freedom to decide their own best approach to work, but there are a small number of them who do micromanage or even play favorites.”

Brimming with PhDs

Whatever the management style, staffers agree that among supervisors, “there is genuine attention paid to career development of junior people.” To help new hires adjust, a consultant explains, “Bates White has a system where all employees are paired with a sponsor and a peer coach. The peer coach is someone at the employee’s level that has been with the firm longer and someone that can be approached with general questions (e.g., ‘How do I expense this?’). The sponsor is a supervisor who is in charge of

helping support and direct the career path of the employee. Sponsors can be approached about any concerns related to the direction of the employee's career (e.g., 'I feel I'm not getting enough opportunities to work with data')."

In general, Bates White is "committed to continual self-improvement." The firm offers "ample opportunities for training," including "brown-bags," "bringing in outside PhDs to present seminars," hosting conferences, sponsoring "courses for employees led by university professors who work at Bates White," offering software training and giving "reimbursement for college courses." And, of course, "much learning occurs on the job." A recent college grad reports, "I have had the opportunity to interact one on one with more PhDs at Bates White in a few months than I did at Berkeley in four years."

More work means more money

Junior staffers tend to report that "the salary is very good"—and they have the added benefit that their "compensation rises when things get crazy." Insiders explain that "everyone below manager level is paid on an hourly basis, so they get an immediate benefit on their real-time paycheck from being asked to work extra hours." Overtime kicks in for "everything over 40 hours per week" and is paid "at the same hourly rate as your base salary." Annual bonuses and "401(k) matching up to 2 percent of salary" are also awarded, although "the bonus is contingent upon staying at the firm 18 months, so if you leave before 18 months you have to return the bonus in full."

Time off is also accrued through overtime. Explains a junior source, "Vacation time is 15 days a year based on a 40-hour week. But you accumulate vacation time hourly, so if you average 50 hours a week, you accumulate more vacation time." In addition, he adds, "you are only required to take vacation time if you work less than 80 hours in a pay period (two weeks). So you can take days off without using vacation time as long as your total hours reach the 80-hour mark."

In other benefits, the firm "contributes a large amount to health insurance." An insider praises, "The insurance is amazing and everything you can think of has been implemented into the medical, dental and vision plans." Many staffers also get "BlackBerry and cell phone service," and everyone can receive "money each month for gym memberships." However, one respondent is disappointed that "maternity and paternity leave are unpaid," adding, "At a firm where hours and demands are as unreasonable as they are, the firm should make strides to help new parents."

No cube farm here

In another perk, the firm's offices have no cubicles; instead, "everyone gets a personal space with a door." A recent hire adds, "By making trade offs (windows, location), even lower-level employees can get a very big office with nice wood desks, etc." Plus, "everyone gets comfortable Aeron office chairs," and "office services will hang paintings up for you." But it's not worth getting too attached to a particular space, as "once a year there is a selection process where everyone can pick a new location in order of seniority."

We're told that "the common space is very nice" as well, and "there are plenty of rooms for internal and client meetings." In addition, the firm has an employee lounge "with drinks and vending machines," and there's even a "pool table and table tennis." Plus, there's "ice cream once a month to celebrate birthdays."

Bring the kids along

The emphasis on comfortable work spaces and flexible hours is of particular note, because staffers are hardly ever on the road. Insiders report that "consultants almost never travel, and when they do it is typically for a day or so to attend a meeting." A manager remarks, "We practically never work on site at a client's office," and a colleague adds that "most of our clients are located in downtown D.C.," where the firm's main office is. When travel does pop up, the majority of it "relates to recruiting efforts" rather than to projects—particularly for junior staff. Higher-ups tend to be away a little more often (a senior consultant says, "managers and above travel more regularly to meet with clients, to testify, etc."), but most still say the requirements are "manageable."

When consultants do find themselves on the road, it's possible to bring children along; a senior consultant notes, "I have traveled to Boston, New York and San Diego with my toddler. Child care has not been hard to find."

Devoted to diversity

By and large, insiders say "the firm emphasizes diversity and actively works at recruiting women." However, one female senior consultant notes, "There are not many women at the senior consultant or manager level. I would be more comfortable with more women in the office." Nonetheless, she continues, "everyone works hard to create an atmosphere that is open, tolerant and respectful." A partner remarks, "The entire economics profession struggles with hiring women into the most senior positions, and Bates White is no exception. There are no female partners at present." However, he adds, "for noneconomists and in more junior positions, we have a good balance of the sexes." A principal agrees: "We have well under 50 percent women in client services, but I think this reflects the dearth of supply of PhD economists that are women. The women we have are highly skilled and valued." A female consultant assures us that "there is no discrimination toward women whatsoever."

"In terms of ethnic minorities or varied nationalities, we've been an unqualified success—foreign born consultants are numerous at Bates White (a reflection of how few Americans are drawn to economics or other sciences at the PhD level)," a manager reports. However, he continues, the firm has not been "as successful with Hispanic- and African-Americans, but not for lack of trying." A principal notes, "The firm has only a handful of African-American PhD economists, but we are actually ahead of the curve on that dimension."

In general, another insider comments, Bates White is "extremely embracing of diversity however you want to define it—friendly to GLBTs, open to people with very nontraditional educational and work backgrounds, etc." An openly gay staffer notes, "We have three GLBT managers and a number at lower levels, as well as a transgender individual." In fact, says a colleague, "Last week the chief human resources officer and one of our software engineers participated in a panel discussion called Transgender Transition: Planning, Communicating and Successfully Managing the Transition of an Employee in Your Workplace."

Making a community connection

The firm also makes time for "participation in activities like tutoring, clothing drives and local food houses," and it's known for its "strong support for volunteer commitments to community service outside the office." A staffer explains, "We have a group called Bates White Community Connection that supports charitable initiatives. Any employee can propose ideas and BWCC will help organize and support the project." A colleague elaborates: "From internal events like book sales and clothing drives to benefit children and the homeless, to external involvement in tutoring, tax preparation for low-income families and soup kitchens, Bates White encourages everyone to be involved." "Most of the firm participates in one way or another on these efforts," we're told. As some added motivation, notes a recent hire, "we get raffle tickets for participating in these things, for a chance to win a prize at the holiday party."

The Brattle Group

44 Brattle Street
Cambridge, MA 01238
Phone: (617) 864-7900
Fax: (617) 864-1576
www.brattle.com

LOCATIONS

Cambridge, MA (HQ)
San Francisco, CA
Washington, DC
Brussels
London

PRACTICE AREAS

Functional Practice Areas

Antitrust/Competition • Commercial Damages •
Environmental Litigation & Regulation • Forensic
Economics • Intellectual Property • International Arbitration
• International Trade • Product Liability • Regulatory
Finance & Accounting • Risk Management • Securities •
Tax • Utility Regulatory Policy & Ratemaking • Valuation

Industry Practice Areas

Electric Power • Financial Institutions • Natural Gas •
Petroleum • Pharmaceuticals, Medical Devices &
Biotechnology • Telecommunications & Media •
Transportation

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
CEO & President: M. Alexis Maniatis
2008 Employees: 178
2007 Employees: 175



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Small and nimble, with some very bright people"
- "Limited scope"
- "Solid in their market niche"
- "Poor management"

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#2 – Travel Requirements

UPPERS

- "There is a sincere desire" to have consulting staff rise to principal level
- Casual dress policy
- Lots of free food
- Higher-ups always have their doors open

DOWNERS

- "It may be hard to get to work on projects outside of your assigned practice area"
- Workload is inconsistent and unpredictable
- The firm does not provide any tuition reimbursement
- "Not much client interaction"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.brattle.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Brilliant in Beantown

The Brattle Group is a provider of consulting and expert testimony in economics, finance and regulation. The firm serves corporations, law firms and governments the world over from multiple offices in the U.S., as well as from locations in London and Brussels. The Cambridge, Mass.-based firm fields a team over 150 strong, ready to take the stand on the subjects of energy, intellectual property, securities and finance, commercial damages, monopolization, risk management, environmental regulation and product liability.

The Brattle Group, which started out in 1990 as a micro-boutique of five experts in Harvard Square, has grown in spurts. The firm absorbed Incentives Research, Inc., in 1995, honing its knowledge of the energy industry. A year later, the first branch office was opened in Washington, D.C. Brattle crossed the Atlantic in 1997 and opened a London office. Locations in San Francisco and Brussels followed in 2002 and 2005, respectively. Today, its specialties lie in energy, finance and competition throughout North America, the European Union and even in the Asia Pacific region, despite having no physical presence there.

In familiar waters

The Brattle Group consultants have immersive backgrounds in a number of industries. In the energy sector, one of its major practice areas, the firm services the electric, natural gas and petroleum industries. It assists electric utilities, deregulated power producers, customers, regulators and energy policy-makers with planning, regulation and litigation efforts. It provides gas clients, whether involved in production, marketing or transport, with expert testimony and advice in regulatory and legal disputes over pricing, prudence and cost recovery, access and contract performance. For the petroleum industry, it consults on asset valuation, contract performance, corporate strategy and risk assessments, financial modeling, market power reviews, reliability, and damages evaluations and royalty disputes. The firm also has a growing practice in climate change policy and planning.

Elsewhere in the halls of commerce, financial institutions call on The Brattle Group when faced with litigation and regulatory matters concerning securities litigation, capital requirements, due diligence, structured finance, risk management, asset valuation, pricing of services, profitability and the cost of capital. Telecommunications and media outfits engaged in fixed-line and wireless communications, mobile satellite services, and cable and satellite television look to the firm for valuation of spectrum, assessment of damages in litigation, pricing of network access, interconnection and other analyses. The Brattle Group also has in-depth knowledge of the transportation and commercial medicine (pharmaceuticals, devices and biotech) markets, as well as an emerging practice in international arbitration.

Get the word out

The Brattle Group's offices must be buzzing with the sound of scribbling and typing. Consultants have shared their insights in countless academic papers, books, articles and reports, appearing in magazines, newspapers and journals all over the world. The firm also publishes a newsletter series that meditates on the state of economics, the environment, energy, finance and telecommunications.

These efforts are also celebrated, on occasion. In December 2007, Senior Advisor Erik Lie received a 2007 Notable Contributions to Accounting Literature Award by the American Accounting Association. Lie's piece, titled "On the Timing of CEO Stock Option Awards," was chosen, among other criteria, for its originality, clarity and potential magnitude of contribution.

The firm doesn't just stand and clap when its consultants win awards—it also doles out honors of its own. The Brattle Group Prize is granted annually to the writers of outstanding academic papers on the subject of corporate finance. It sponsors the award to foster intellectual inquiry within the areas of finance and economics. Winners, who will find the prize sweetened by a \$10,000 check (and \$5,000 checks for two runners-up), are chosen by the associate editors of *The Journal of Finance*.

Side by side

As would be expected of a company that rewards academic scholarship (not to mention one founded within a stone's throw of Harvard), The Brattle Group's corporate organization is molded for collegiality. It refers to its consultants collectively as a "team," and the chain of command is structured flatly, encouraging input in a peer-like manner from individuals of any rank. The firm's leaders, known as principals, are experts in their field, holding advanced degrees and experience in both the public and private sectors. Principal Daniel McFadden of the University of California, Berkeley, for example, was the co-winner of the 2000 Nobel Prize in Economics, and Stewart C. Myers of MIT co-authored one of the leading graduate-level textbooks on corporate finance. Next to the principals are the senior advisors, who also carry strong credentials from the academic and industrial spheres, and the consultants and associates, who engage in the grittier roles of analysis and research.

GETTING HIRED

A nod to Letterman

To help win over prospective candidates, The Brattle Group includes a list of the Top 10 Reasons to Join The Brattle Group on its careers site. At No. 9, "good times" includes "office parties every Friday after 5 p.m.," and at No. 6, "nothing but the best" means that the firm strives to "provide advanced software tools and rapid-response IT support; leading-edge methodologies and modeling techniques; comprehensive, up-to-date research support and facilities; and efficient, effective administrative support." Coming in at No. 3, "Didn't know that? Don't worry, you will," speaks to the firm's commitment to ensuring that all consultants "have every opportunity to learn and grow." The Brattle Group expands further on that topic on its web site, with detailed descriptions of its various "learning and development programs," including new staff orientation, new consulting training, a mentoring program and brown-bag seminars. Topping the chart at No. 1, "every day a challenge," the firm insists, "There is never anything routine about the work we do," and reports that consultants are expected to "handle challenging, engaging tasks with confidence and skill."

Work the Web

Job seekers intrigued by the firm's offerings can view and apply for current openings or submit a general application online. The straightforward application process involves completing a brief form and attaching a resume and cover letter.

The Brattle Group hires undergraduates and graduates from top programs around the world, and participates in various recruiting events on college campuses and at recruiting consortiums in the U.S.; the recruiting calendar is available on its web site. One research analyst reports that "only candidates with math, engineering, finance and economics backgrounds are considered."

Why The Brattle Group?

Qualified candidates will typically have an initial "brief, in-person or telephone screening," followed by "a full day of interviews at the office." A source notes that, for research analyst candidates, the "interview day usually consists of two interviews with analysts, one associate interview, one case study and two interviews with [principals]." For associate-level hiring, the process includes a "presentation on a research topic," but we're told that requirement "may be waived if you are an experienced hire." "Occasionally, a candidate can be asked to visit an office more than once to meet additional people," an associate adds.

A senior research associate advises, "Be prepared to back up general answers with examples from actual experiences, to describe a relevant research paper and quantitative analysis in detail, and to explain why you're interested in economic consulting, and Brattle in particular."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Lots to learn

Opinions about the culture at The Brattle Group range from “fairly pleasant” to “amazing,” but in all, insiders are pleased with their office environment. On the less enthusiastic side, some consultants are disappointed that “workers cannot expect more than a monetary reward” and that “incompetence is tolerated.” But on the opposite side of the spectrum, others say there’s a “clear recognition of the value of analysts, both generally and on project teams.” Many insist that the “environment is very collegial, and there are plenty of opportunities to learn new things.” One happy senior research associate tells us he chose to work for The Brattle Group because it “is a relatively small company with comfortable interaction with associates and principals, there is a noncompetitive and academic environment, and there is a focus on quality and integrity in the work.” And a colleague raves, “I am surrounded by awesome, ridiculously intelligent people. I learn something new every day, and am encouraged to do so. I am trusted to take on more responsibility, and those I work with are genuinely interested in my professional development.”

Doors are open

We’re also told that “analysts are encouraged to interact with associates and principals,” and that “conflicts are rare due to the collaborative environment.” An associate reports that “most [principals] have an open-door policy and associates can work directly with principals on every detail.” A colleague adds, “On project work, managers are willing to take time out to explain the big picture and answer questions,” and a recent hire agrees that “project managers are easy to talk to, will answer questions and, as you become a more experienced research associate, they will give you more responsibility within the project team. This includes more in-depth analysis and interaction with the clients.” Another newbie confirms that “everyone within the company is very approachable, and an open door is the norm, not the exception. Earlier this year, I came up with a new scheduling system that would provide better data in less time. After speaking with some members of management, we had a meeting to discuss implementations.”

A juggling act

Despite that improvement, many grumble that time management is not the firm’s forte. Although most insiders report 45- to 55-hour workweeks (which one respondent acknowledges as “moderate, in comparison to other consulting firms”), they express frustration with their hours because the “work seems to be spread unevenly, both over time and among consultants.” One associate moans, “There is almost never the right balance. Either you are swamped or you are bored sitting at your desk!” Another agrees, “Some weeks you can be working nonstop, while other weeks you may not have much to do.” A higher-up explains, “We work on several projects at once. If the schedules change such that deadlines converge on your projects, there is nothing that can be done except working long hours.” Others complain that they have “continuously been working on billable projects,” while also spending “several weeks on business development, training, recruiting and other non-billable work.” “It can be overwhelming juggling all the obligations asked,” a senior associate sighs.

Sticking close to home

In one clear advantage when it comes to maintaining balance, the firm has “no travel requirements.” “I have never traveled for work while at The Brattle Group,” reports a pleased research analyst. “Travel can happen for a kick-off meeting or a meeting closer to the end of a project, but about 95 percent of a project is conducted remotely” from the Brattle offices, a senior associate reports. Still, we’re told that “experienced analysts can travel if they express interest.” Overall, “principals and senior associates are the ones who travel more and deal with clients.”

Just say no

Because of the uneven workflow, some claim that “it’s hard to work and still make other commitments unless you are willing to break them.” One associate goes so far as to say that “it is pretty much impossible to have a life.” And a senior research analyst protests, “Analysts with great work ethic, great work product and dedication to projects are rewarded by being overloaded with work constantly, and many are burned out this way. The Brattle Group does not have a good safety mechanism for preventing this, and analysts in this situation are expected to confront project managers and be aggressive about shedding work.” He adds, “Be prepared to say no to superiors when necessary, or the work will be overwhelming.” When workloads get heavy, an insider says, “you can try to pull other people in, but consultants and analysts and even admin can say no.” Meanwhile, a research analyst observes that “it’s all hands on deck when there is a problem. And there are frequently problems.”

Then again, some respondents say that although “it is expected for the team to work late nights and weekends when deadlines are approaching,” consultants are still “able to balance work and life.” An associate reports, “People are very considerate about family needs and work hours can be easily adjusted.” Another concurs: “The work schedule can be demanding, but at the same time, extremely flexible and accommodating.” Plus, there’s “no office face time requirement.”

Non-billable hours should count for something

The variable work hours frustrate some consultants with respect to compensation, as well. We’re told that “50 percent of the year-end bonus is based on utilization hours, and the other 50 percent is based on reviews and a contribution to the firm component.” But one feels that “there is a disincentive to do non-billable work.” A colleague explains, “If you were able to work 40 hours per week, 80 percent billable, the compensation is OK. But sometimes work is cyclical—extremely busy and then slow—so your average billable rate is nothing great, but the toll of the extreme business is hard. The compensation seems low when that occurs.”

The freshman five

Others who are more content with the salary say it is slightly above average for the industry, and mention that the “firm provides profit sharing after three years.” A senior associate notes, “They make some profit-sharing contribution to 401(k) every year,” in addition to health insurance and a \$400 vision benefit.

Other perks include “snacks in the kitchen and a fully stocked beverage refrigerator.” In fact, warns an associate, “you can expect to gain five pounds within the first two months of hire, due to the abundance of free food!” The firm organizes “ski outings in the winter and summer outings in the summer,” and “every Friday, there are themed parties so that all members of the firm can get together and socialize.” Most respondents say that these “extra company events and activities add significantly to the quality of the culture here.” But as one party-pooper grumbles, “With the number of hours that we already spend in the office, being forced to hang out with your co-workers is not fun, especially when you have to stay until the early morning to get work done that couldn’t be done because of ‘mandatory’ hang-out time.”

Maybe up or out?

Opinions differ when it comes to the promotion process at The Brattle Group. Some insist it is “not up or out,” while others claim it is “not strictly up or out, but more and more it is becoming that way,” and still others label it as “pretty much up or out.” Nonetheless, one research analyst explains, “promotions are reviewed at the end of every fiscal year,” adding, “Usually, everybody gets to a higher level after each year is done.” A colleague agrees, “Analysts are typically considered for promotion once per year, and for the first three to four years promotions are pretty straightforward.” However, he notes, “beyond that, the policy/structure of promotions gets hazy. Good analysts can stay with periodic salary increases but won’t necessarily get promoted.”

When it comes to promotion decisions, some respondents complain that “time served seems to be a more important factor than hard work,” that “how quickly you advance depends a lot on who you work for” and that “internal competition over the same

clients creates barriers for moving up.” It’s also worth noting that “although promotions occur within the research analyst level, it is rare to be promoted from research analyst to associate.” Looking farther into the future, a senior consultant states that associates can expect to make “principal by 10 years, usually.” And making that landmark seem more attainable, an associate explains that “every associate is viewed and trained as a future principal from the point of hiring. Being a top-heavy company, the opportunities to learn and improve are endless at the associate level.”

Much mentoring

To that end, we’re told that “The Brattle Group has both official and unofficial training.” A higher-up comments, “The formal training consists of a weeklong [new-hire] orientation in the summer, a weeklong training for consultants only in the fall, plus a mentoring program whereby analysts meet with a mentor every six months.” Unofficially, there are “many opportunities for informal mentoring,” as well as “presentations/brown-bags on specific topics to meet the demand by the analysts.” There is also “a lot of knowledge sharing among the analysts”; for example, “more experienced research analysts will train new research analysts in Excel and Stata, and along with project managers, will explain the concepts and the big picture.” Sources say the formal training is anywhere from “mediocre” to “really good,” but most agree that “the on-the-job training and mentor system are excellent.”

Community service, to some degree

Opinions also differ on the efforts made at The Brattle Group to reach out to the community at large. One respondent says the firm only “occasionally participates in charity drives,” whereas another insists “there is a lot of opportunity for community involvement throughout the year.” A colleague notes that “charity events are held seasonally, if not monthly.”

In essence, a few insiders explain that the firm “itself does not sponsor community involvement,” but add that “employees are able to participate” in volunteer activities “through an internal community action committee.” One active samaritan notes, “We participate via food/book/clothing drives, walks/runs for various causes and holiday gift donations.”

Decently diverse

When it comes to diversity at The Brattle Group, a respondent warns that “high-level promotions for women tend to take longer,” and it follows that “there are few women in top-level positions.” That being said, a colleague adds, “at lower levels, women dominate,” and others agree that “women are well represented at the analyst and junior associate levels.” We’re also told that, “with respect to minorities, The Brattle Group is very diverse.” “The firm is very receptive to minorities,” comments a senior source, adding that “minorities in the qualified applicant pool are well represented in the company.”

Buck Consultants

One Pennsylvania Plaza
New York, NY 10119
Phone: (212) 330-1000
Fax: (212) 695-4184
www.buckconsultants.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)
46 offices in 12 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Communication
Compensation
Health & Productivity
HR Technology & Administration
Human Capital Management
Retirement

THE STATS

Employer Type: Independent Subsidiary of Affiliated
Computer Services
Ticker Symbol: ACS (NYSE)
President & Executive Managing Director: Jan K. Grude
2008 Employees: 1,700 +
2007 Employees: 1,700

UPPERS

- "Independence and responsibility"
- "Teamwork is important"
- Strong salary and benefits

DOWNERS

- "Need deeper global resources"
- Some internal politics
- "Not enough creative projects"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Go to the "Join our Team" section of the firm's web site



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Strong HR background"
- "No creativity"
- "Improved"
- "Number crunchers"

THE SCOOP

The human (resources) touch

Not all human resources directors want to be like Catbert, the evil HR director from the *Dilbert* comic strip. For those who want to improve, Buck Consultants provides advice in a variety of HR areas, including retirement services, health and welfare programs, human capital management, compensation strategy, effective employee communications, and HR technology and consulting. The firm also works frequently with state and local governments. In 2007, it was the sixth-largest HR consulting firm in the United States. Through ACS/Mellon HSA Solutions, the firm is involved with more than 480,000 health savings accounts (HSA) holding over \$387 million.

Helping to invent HR

Buck was founded as an actuarial firm in 1916, a time when the concept of HR was just getting off the ground. In the old days, “human resources” referred to human beings’ status as a commodity like oil or timber; however, as government and union pressure generated more labor-friendly conditions, the company emerged as an advisor to employers wading into the new waters.

George B. Buck Sr. started the firm with just two employees in New York City, and steadily put together an impressive string of firsts. The firm is credited with starting the first global employee stock ownership plan. It nurtured the first fully integrated HSA. It was also one of the first firms to apply actuarial principles to retirement plans. In 1999, *Pensions & Investments* named Buck Sr. one of its Men of the Century. Then, in 1996, after 80 years of independence, the firm was acquired by Mellon. Affiliated Computer Services (ACS), a global outsourcing and IT services provider, subsequently bought Buck from Mellon in March 2005, in an effort to complement its outsourcing capabilities.

Buck, in more than just name

Unfortunately there has been obvious turmoil at Buck since the ACS acquisition, perhaps due to basic ideological differences of outsourcing firms and consulting firms—a situation worsened by Buck’s long history of independence. Whatever the reasons, ACS ended up firing and then suing Buck’s Chairman of the Board Howard Fine and Executive Managing Director Christopher Michalak in January 2007. ACS alleges that Fine and Michalak attempted to arrange the sale of Buck without notifying ACS, which it claims might discourage businesses from working with it. Fine and Michalak are even suspected of trying to convince fellow Buck staff to resign if the sale didn’t go through. As of summer 2008, the suit had not been resolved.

Michalak was replaced as executive managing director by Jan K. Grude, who had been heading Buck’s Canadian operations. Prior to her position at Buck, Grude had worked at Mellon, Arthur Young and Ernst & Young.

Some shining stars

However, ACS has trumpeted the achievements of other staff at the firm. In August 2007, Tammy Shelton and Kate Van Hulzen were chosen by *Business Insurance* magazine for its annual Women to Watch list. Shelton is a principal based in the Dallas office, while Van Hulzen is a principal in Los Angeles. In 2008, *Consulting* magazine named Jacquie Walker, of Buck’s Toronto office, one of 2008’s Top 25 Consultants, and in 2006, Paul Sailor, the retirement practice leader in Houston, was selected for the same honor.

States of grace

Several state governments remain loyal Buck clients, despite any internal tension with ACS. In December 2007, the firm renewed its contract to provide retirement plan services for the state of Wyoming. These plans cover state employees, school employees, law enforcement, firefighters and judges, with over \$6 billion in assets. In October 2007, Buck agreed to continue providing actuarial and retirement plan services for the state of Nebraska, covering around 60,000 active participants and 33,000

retirees. July 2006 brought word that the firm would handle retirement administration services for the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, a longtime client, and in 2005, Buck took over actuarial services for the state of Alaska, having found that the previous actuary had underestimated the state's health care costs by 7 percent. This discovery led Alaska to sue the previous actuary in December 2007.

GETTING HIRED

Combing the country's top actuarial schools

New hires at Buck Consultants "typically come from industry" and from "top actuarial and mathematic schools." The firm recruits "more formally" on the East Coast, but also looks at applicants from UCLA, Texas A&M and University of Texas. Candidates go through "at least two interviews," but there are "no employment tests of any kind." On interview days, candidates have the "opportunity to meet with all potential co-workers at varying levels to see how personalities match." Sometimes, interviews are spread out over an extended period; one insider recalls, "I had several interviews over several months before I was hired."

A number of respondents tell us they chose Buck over other companies because of its "small and nimble" feel, and they were encouraged by the fact that it's "large enough to be able to offer adequate investment."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

The oldest culture that doesn't exist

Founded in 1916, making it the "oldest HR consulting firm," Buck Consultants is "very entrepreneurial and a great place to be an actuary," an insider says. It's "very old and well established," yet "not as well known." Respondents say the firm's culture is very professional, and there is "mutual trust and respect among co-workers." Consultants enjoy "independence and responsibility" that, for some, provides a "close to ideal situation." But others find the atmosphere at Buck to be "very average," explaining that the "corporate culture has declined since the firm was purchased by ACS in mid-2005." One insider says, "We don't have a culture. It's not bad; we just don't have a culture." According to some colleagues, there is "nothing to get excited about" and "nothing to feel bonded to." Recently, "supervisor relationships have deteriorated, as managing staff is no longer a priority." There are also some "unique" and "weird" personalities, which sometimes makes it "hard to build good, trusting relationships."

As long as the client is happy

Buck staffers are afforded "complete flexibility with work schedules," but there is an understanding that "client needs come first." In fact, one consultant feels "you can't say no." That said, the firm is "not very demanding." There is "no company directive" to work a certain number of hours, just that consultants be "very committed to the needs of clients." Project length varies dramatically, and can range "anywhere from three months to four years." Most consultants say they work between 40 and 50 hours per week, but "it can be boring during the slow times." Some actually wish the firm was more demanding. According to one source, "Buck loses many opportunities due to lack of demands and focus."

Travel is "often up to the individual consultant's judgment," which makes it "not so much a requirement as a perceived client commitment." Certain individuals would "actually like to travel more," because "it's good to get out of the office and see clients in person." Others do their fair share of traveling, including some "tough, same-day excursions." One source notes, "It's painful to leave at five or six in the morning and come back later that night. It is really exhausting and hard on my spouse, too."

Nothing to write home about

Some respondents consider compensation at Buck “generally good,” while others fear that the firm’s “corporate parent will only keep chipping away at our compensation and benefits, as it has done since it bought us.” The firm provides “competitive” benefits, but “nothing stands out” in the way of extra perks. The “401(k) investment choices are very good,” and consultants can help themselves to free coffee and soft drinks. In terms of amenities, we’re told the New York office is “dark, but very conveniently located.” In Dallas, the office is “fine,” but on the “bland” side. It’s “not a fun place to work,” because it feels “just blah.” Still, it’s “pleasant, clean, easy to get to and safe.” The San Diego digs are reportedly “great,” but that location is “lacking in administrative support.”

Learning and growing

Buck offers “formal onboarding and ongoing training” through its “university,” but some feel the courses are “taught by consultants who may not have the qualifications.” One insider remarks, “I would not say we have a ‘real’ training program with top-level experts.” Nor does the firm “strictly enforce the need to have continuous training.” Sources also indicate that training for consultants based on the East Coast tends to be more formal than that offered out West.

Advancement at Buck takes place “at managers’ discretion and relates directly to employee performance.” For example, “less motivated individuals can remain at their level of competency.” Some insiders find the promotion process to be “very political” and “secretive,” and meant “to wear you down.” One consultant offers a theory: “I think promotions happen quickly if you bring in a big-money client.”

Mixed on diversity and community service

Respondents say Buck is a “very diverse firm” when it comes to gender, and maintaining that status is “respected by all.” In the upper levels, the firm is “still male-dominated,” but there are “some senior-level females.” In general, “women do well” at Buck, but “moms don’t do as well, based on their lack of availability to take on more work.” In terms of ethnic diversity, we’re told the firm is “hardly diverse,” and regarding gays and lesbians, “it is a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ environment.” On that topic, one consultant comments, “I’m sure we have some [GLBT] folks here—not many, but some. And I don’t think anyone is concerned about it.”

Buck’s participation in community events varies by location. In some areas, the firm offers “strong sponsorship of local events,” such as “New York Cares events on weekends.” Other offices do “things like participating in 10K runs for charity” and undertaking food drives. One consultant chips in by “supervising actuarial exams.”

Celerant Consulting

45 Hayden Avenue
Lexington, MA 02421
Phone: (781) 674-0400
Fax: (781) 674-0401
www.celerantconsulting.com

LOCATIONS

Lexington, MA (US HQ)
London (Global HQ)
Amsterdam • Brussels • Copenhagen • Düsseldorf • Helsinki
• Oslo • Paris • Stockholm • Toronto

PRACTICE AREAS

Asset Management
Business Performance Management
Government Services
Innovation
Integrated Supply Chain
Organizational Effectiveness
Private Equity
Process Excellence
Revenue Growth

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
CEO: Ian Clarkson
Chief Financial Director: Kathryn Herrick
President, Celerant Americas: David Henderson
President, Celerant Europe: Danny Van D'huynslager
2008 Employees: 600
2007 Employees: 600
2007 Revenue: €111.6 million
2006 Revenue: €115.9 million

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #7 – Interaction with Clients
- #8 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #9 – Overall Satisfaction
- #16 – Firm Culture

Diversity

- #11 – Diversity for Minorities
- #18 (Tie) – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- “Hands-on experiences from the get-go”
- Opportunities for growth
- “The sustainable results we deliver to clients”

DOWNERS

- “Pockets of politics”
- Travel is a constant, five days per week
- “Profit sharing (bonus) is not equivalent across functions/levels”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.celerantconsulting.com/Careers/careers.aspx

THE SCOOP

Everything is new again

Celerant Consulting celebrated its 20th anniversary year in 2007, laying claim to being the largest independent operational consultancy in the world. Although founded as a private firm in 1987, Celerant has undergone several stages of growth, most recently from 2001 to 2006 as part of software company Novell. If working for a Euro-centered firm turns you on, then Celerant may be your match—it has only two offices in North America, accompanied by nine in Europe. The majority of its people work on client sites across North America, Europe, the Middle East, Russia and other emerging countries, and the group's operations in North America continue to grow at 20 percent per year. The firm focuses on delivering measurable results from operational improvement, drawing on expertise in the areas of asset management, business performance management, innovation, integrated supply chain, organizational effectiveness, process excellence and revenue growth. Through its Closework® approach, the consultancy weaves itself into a client, allowing for collaboratively developed and executed operational change.

Over the years, Celerant's clients have included BP, Church & Dwight, Occidental Petroleum, RadioShack, Rohm & Haas, Reuters, Rhodia and Wyeth. Clients come from a wide variety of sectors, including chemicals, energy, consumer goods, insurance, life sciences and health care, manufacturing, metals and mining, pulp and paper, retail, telecommunications and utilities.

The great American Novell

So how did Celerant go from standing as an independent firm to being owned by a software company? In 1987, the two founders mixed their middle names to christen a new firm: Peter Chadwick. After a decade of steady growth, the firm merged with Cambridge Technology Partners in 1997, changing its name to Cambridge Management Consulting.

In July 2001, with Novell's finances still hurting from Microsoft's entry into networking, the software company purchased CTP. The idea was that CTP would allow Novell to spread into e-business software support, consulting and IT services. After the buyout, the Cambridge Management Consulting arm renamed itself Celerant. At first, the buy seemed ideal, as CTP gave Novell the anticipated boost, and Celerant's revenue rose from \$130 million to \$150 million. And while Celerant remained profitable, Novell could not escape the fact that its networking software was still faltering in the marketplace, and decided to strip down and throw its full attention back into software. In May 2006, Celerant went through a management buyout for \$77 million. British investment firm Caledonia Investments tossed \$30 million into the deal, too, in exchange for a minority stake in Celerant.

The shadow knows

The primary way that Celerant differentiates itself is with its Closework approach—an attempt to get down and dirty with a company's operational problems, working side by side with employees to identify all of the individual components. This way, every employee, section and department will identify their goals and learn how to collaborate, rather than compete, with each other. Celerant contrasts this system with what it calls “off-the-peg solutions” of many other consulting firms. Thanks to Closework, the firm says it was able to bring clients more than \$1 billion in sustainable business benefits in 2007.

The case of the wild, wild North

Celerant was tapped in 2006 by North American Construction Group (NACG), which, at the time, was looking to launch an IPO. The Canadian company specialized in a variety of mining support services in the oil sands of northern Alberta. It was very skilled at getting jobs done, but the rugged nature of the industry and location had created a shoot-from-the-hip atmosphere that led to a high degree of inefficiency in operations. Working directly with NACG staff both in the field and in the head office, Celerant put together a number of operational improvements for the company that led to \$32 million in cost savings and a 4:1 overall return on investment for the project. The client was able to go public in November 2006.

GETTING HIRED

Experience matters

Celerant does not recruit at schools; instead, insiders tell us, “we seek experienced people for our positions.” As a result, the best way to find available positions is on the firm’s careers web site. Interested parties can apply for specific positions or send in a generic cover letter and resume for a potential match.

Qualified candidates generally have an initial “phone screen with someone in their field,” followed by one round of “face-to-face interviews with at least two employees” as well as “one with human resources.” Sources say “questions will range from cultural fit to technical skills.” “Case studies of actual projects” are typically included as well, addressing topics such as, “How would you approach the project?” and “Where would you look for results?”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Just do it

“Hard work pays off” at Celerant, staffers say, where “the culture is one of collaboration and delivering results.” There’s a “roll-up your sleeves and jump in and do what it takes” mentality—which, for one project manager, sometimes feels like a “focus on profitability at almost all cost.” Others say that while it’s true the firm is “focused on getting results to the client and offering the best service to meet their needs,” it’s also the case that “we take care of our people.” A partner remarks that, in his opinion, “Celerant’s corporate culture is collaborative and inclusive at all levels of the organization,” and a senior consultant agrees, “My colleagues are all very pleasant people and teams get along very well.”

Another analyst insists, “Our core values tell it all: respect, collaboration, humility, optimism, integrity and results.” A colleague agrees, “The company’s values are extremely important to it, and they are exhibited by its people.” Another staffer remarks, “Just talking with the people, seeing how they are viewed by their clients, you fall in love with Celerant and the opportunities to grow with them.” A lead analyst gushes, “Celerant has become my family.”

Bond from the beginning

Supervisors get high marks as well—one staffer finds, “They are the best that I have ever worked for.” There are “no ego issues,” and “everyone pitches in to get the job done.” According to one analyst, “If you walked into a room full of Celerant folks, you probably wouldn’t be able to tell who was the VP and who was the junior consultant—it’s a team effort.”

Insiders report that bonds with clients are equally strong: “They almost become family,” a consultant claims. A longtimer remarks, “We build long-lasting relationships with our people and our clients based on mutual respect and a desire to make businesses better.” And this connection starts right away—a recent hire explains, “I have had the opportunity to interact with and present to top-level management at Fortune 500 companies within my first year at the firm.” Many staffers believe the “interaction with clients” and the sense that they are “providing tangible results” are the best features of the firm.

Query via e-mail

Respondents agree that, “from top to bottom, employees are treated equally and learning is highly encouraged.” But when it comes to training specifics, opinions are mixed. One lead analyst raves, “The executive training program has been phenomenal.” Another source is just pleased that the “trainings that are held in different cities throughout the year are all expenses paid.” Meanwhile, others report that “most training is informal.” An analyst explains, “If you have a question, just send out a blanket e-mail and someone will always get back to you with some good advice.” A vice president agrees, “The informal network is very strong,” but notes that, in his opinion, the “formal training needs to be strengthened.”

Know what you're getting into

Everyone agrees, however, that the “travel expectation is 100 percent” at Celerant. Consultants are either on the road “Monday morning through Friday afternoon, or Sunday evening through Thursday evening.” But “this is what you sign up for,” remarks a new hire, “so while it is excessive, it is in the job description. You have to want to do it.” While that may be the case, a contact sighs, “I did sign up for it, but by Friday morning I am burnt out.”

Weekends are sacred ... for some

Opinions are mixed on how much of a toll the travel takes on work/life balance. “At first it had an effect on my health,” one staffer shares, “until I was able to organize myself better and get the right balance of health activities into my schedule.” He continues, “There is plenty of time to participate in personal interests, even while on the road, as long as you are organized about it,” adding, “We are given a lot of flexibility by management, and by our clients as well. Our expectations are results-driven, not time spent.” And, an analyst reports, “When I work overseas, I am always encouraged to take the equivalent time off.” Others insist that “weekends are protected and sacred in Celerant.” “So, while I am required to travel each week, I am always given my weekend time,” a source notes. A senior consultant agrees, “Team management is generally extremely good at making sure there is a balance during the week and that team members are at home with their families/friends over the weekend.”

Some disagree, especially when it comes to weekend work. A vice president who works most weekends reports, “Travel is extremely heavy, and weekends are used to keep up.” A partner says that working on the weekends is the norm, but finds it “is usually just a few hours of catch-up work or preparation for the following week, and it’s done at home, not on site.” Another insider is relieved that, although weekend work is no rarity, he can work from home. Summing it up, he says, “I work on weekends when I feel I have to, and don’t when I don’t think I have to.”

Nine years to VP on the fast track

All told, “including travel time,” most insiders report workweeks of “approximately 50 to 60 hours.” Still, notes a partner, “I believe long hours are manageable and expected when the work is interesting, exciting and meaningful to me, my teams and my clients.” And, a vice president adds, “we are paid well to work hard.” Some comment that, “due to the growth rate of firm, compensation for high performers can grow very fast,” and “a person can progress as quickly as he is able.” For example, says one higher-up, “I went from entry level to vice president in nine years.” But there are no guarantees: Another consultant warns that, as far as he can tell, “you cannot expect a significant pay raise after the first year because there is an expectation that you put in a good one-and-a-half years or two full years before any promotions are really considered.” A project manager remarks, “I’ve seen employees jump multiple levels in a year, as well as sit at the same level for multiple years.”

The best benefits

In noncompensatory financial incentives, Celerant offers shareholding opportunities for senior staff, as well as “matching up to 4 percent on the 401(k).” The health benefits are reportedly “fantastic” (“the best insurance I have ever experienced in my career,” claims an experienced staffer). Other extras include “generous vacation and personal time,” life insurance, vision and dental, pretax health and child care savings accounts and an “annual wellness benefit of \$100,” which can be used for “a massage, new running shoes or whatever will make you a happier person.” The firm has its fair share of fun as well; for example, the annual meetings are held “in exotic locations,” such as St. Kitts.

“Not enough” charity or diversity

Respondents tell us Celerant participates in some “annual charity events,” but feel that the firm’s philanthropic efforts are “not enough.” On an annual basis, though, Celerant makes “donations to two charities chosen through a survey of all employees,” and it will also “match employees’ charity contributions up to \$100 each year.”

And, although “the firm is receptive to hiring women,” some insiders say it “has a very long way to go to balance out” diversity. A lead analyst notes, “We don’t have enough female officers today,” although he adds that when it comes to minority hiring, the firm is “making more progress.” Still, a female staffer comments, “Celerant is actively trying to improve the number of women in the firm,” and a colleague reports that “many women were elected as award winners this year.”

Dean & Company

8065 Leesburg Pike, 5th Floor
Vienna, VA 22182
Phone: (703) 506-3900
Fax: (703) 506-3905
www.dean.com

LOCATION

Vienna, VA (HQ)

PRACTICE AREAS

Consumer Products
Energy
Financial Services
Life Sciences
Media & Entertainment
New Technology
Private Equity/M&A Support
Retail Management
Telecommunications

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: Dean L. Wilde II
2008 Employees: 70
2007 Employees: 70

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#14 – Travel Requirements

UPPERS

- High pay
- “Everyone knows your name”
- “No revenue for revenue’s sake”
- “Responsibility is given as quickly as it can be handled”

DOWNERS

- Internal politics can hinder communication
- “Expectation of face time”
- “Growing pains”
- “Case options are somewhat limited”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.dean.com/careers/recruiting.htm



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Solid, insightful, tight-knit”
- “Think way too highly of themselves”
- “Very analytical focus”
- “DC-centric”

THE SCOOP

In relentless pursuit of the new

Maybe the most surprising statement in Dean & Company's fact sheet is this bold admission: "We recognize that our special capabilities are not matched to all business problems." The firm feels that its "special capabilities" are for companies that want to fully engage in a new type of economy for the 21st century. With large clients, Dean focuses on finding companies that want to be aggressive and make potentially radical shifts in direction to actively create business. This has led the firm to industries that are changing at a rapid pace, such as telecom and wireless, technology and deregulated electric utilities. For small emerging businesses, the firm tries to find the key factors that will help them survive and thrive, to the point where it will take an active part in the client's management or help provide funds until venture capital can be arranged.

The firm was founded in 1993 by Dean Wilde and James Smist, who met while working together at Mercer Management Consulting. Dean works in a number of industries, such as financial services, life sciences, private equity, telecom, media and entertainment, consumer products, retail management, energy and new technology. Its client list contains three of the 10-biggest U.S. banks, one of the world's top-five pharmaceutical companies, one of the world's three major telecommunications companies, one of the top-three U.S. insurance companies, and one of the three-largest hotel/casino/resort companies in the U.S. The firm claims to have added \$20 billion in value to its clients, and to have generated internal rates of return that can exceed 30 percent. Clients' returns on investment have an average ratio of 15:1.

Making connections

Dean doesn't just talk the talk when it comes to forging diverse networks. For example, in 2006, it developed an alliance with Corporate Value Associates, a London-based consulting firm that markets itself as a "global strategy boutique." In the area of private equity, Dean has a long-term partnership with Lindsay Goldberg to oversee a \$5 billion private equity fund. Dean has also partnered on private equity with KKR, Madison Dearborn and Apollo.

Wilde's taste for electricity led him to found DC Energy in 2002, the idea for which germinated from a Dean & Company consulting case. DC Energy, which has remained collocated with Dean, is a trading firm that focuses on energy markets. It invests using an analytical approach to applying differential expertise, instead of the more common practice of using highly leveraged transactions that amplify narrow spreads. It also emphasizes a team approach, rather than dividing investment functions among isolated staff sections.

The Delta force

In 2001, Wilde, other members of the firm and Arnoldo Hax of the MIT Sloan School of Management, published *The Delta Project: Discovering New Sources of Profitability in a Networked Economy*. The book outlined the Delta Model, for which Dean has now become a conduit. Wilde and his partners developed the model because they felt that traditional management systems had become outdated in our highly networked world. The Delta Model was created as part of a broad collaboration, which included the CEOs of Saturn, Siemens, Unilever and other major companies.

The model is built upon four key areas: "the triangle," which involves the strategy choices of creating the best product, putting together a total customer solution and locking in the company's product while locking out competitors; "adaptive processes," which builds a strategy that implements the triangle; "metrics," which, instead of large-scale average metrics, focuses on extremely detailed "granular" metrics; and "experimentation and feedback," which means adapting strategies in response to the ultra-quick nature of the modern economy. The Delta Model also concentrates on "bonding," which means creating relationships across a spectrum of suppliers, competitors, customers and others, instead of creating systems that concentrate on market rivalry.

GETTING HIRED

The Ivy crowd

In picking up new talent, Dean & Company keeps to a short list of schools. “We recruit at eight to 10 top undergraduate institutions, including a couple of Ivies and UVA, Wake Forest and UNC. We also recruit PhDs from Princeton, MIT and Harvard, and MBAs from MIT Sloan,” says one insider. It gets even more selective after that; a source reveals, “There will be a window to submit resumes, then they will screen resumes using a team of employees who have attended the school of interest (which ensures that you get an accurate read of the difficulty of the candidate’s class schedule, etc.).”

Round and round

The firm interviews candidates in steps. An analyst reports, “Generally, the interview process consists of a 30-minute first round case interview and two 45-minute second-round case interviews. At times, the firm also uses resume interviews and additional case interviews during the process.” One respondent calls the interviews “very numbers-focused,” and another adds that they are “all very analytical.” The content of the case interviews is kept tightly under wraps—“yeah right,” responds one insider when asked about what questions to expect—but a colleague reveals that they “tend to be based on real client work, and are far more involved than the standard market-sizing questions.” An analyst recalls, “In general, cases are heavily focused on analytically solving business problems, as opposed to brainteasers.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

A people place

Dean seems to foster mutual admiration among its employees. “There is a sense of camaraderie among team members and a genuine effort to give everyone at the firm the support and guidance they need to excel,” says an analyst. A colleague feels that “culture among the employees is collaborative, friendly and supportive.” The word collegial pops up often, and an insider points out that “people go out of their way to help each other.” A recent hire notes, “Dean’s culture is great for self-starters who take the initiative to learn and develop their skill sets, and who welcome feedback. Everyone’s office door is always open, and more tenured people are always willing to help more junior employees learn the ropes.”

So they like their colleagues, but how do they feel about the management? According to one analyst, “The company is small enough so that you really get the opportunity to learn from the higher-ups. They also truly care about the well-being of their employees and, on the whole, are very receptive to feedback.” Another shares, “I have a great relationship with my manager, who has also become my mentor and friend. He has been instrumental in my professional development, and has spent a lot of effort creating growth opportunities for me.”

Quality time is spent with clients, as well. Says one respondent, “I have been able to build strong relationships with senior clients within my first two years here, which has provided unique insight into how our client organizations work.” Another excitedly reports, “Within my first month at the firm, I was already in meetings with the CFO and COO of a Fortune 500 company!”

It can get late

Balancing work and life at Dean is not always an easy task. A source explains, “Workload is highly variable, depending on case staffing. There are people here who work 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and others who are in past midnight four nights a week.” Another source qualifies the difficulty, saying, “Though the hours aren’t as bad as investment banking and can vary from case to case, you will be expected to work weekends, late nights, travel with less than 24 hours notice and stay late unexpectedly.” Still, says a co-worker, “Most managers are good about respecting nonwork commitments, given reasonable advance notice,” and another staffer has found that, “as I’ve become more efficient, I very rarely have to work weekends. This is very different from when I

first started, where I had to work on most weekends.” Ultimately, it may be “determined by luck.” In one analyst’s view, “Some VPs/managers do everything in their power to protect your free time. Others have no hesitation in bending over backward for the client, resulting in everyone on the team pulling late nights and weekends.”

Paintball perks and bowling benefits

The firm sponsors a variety of fun events for its staff during off-time. A source mentions the “monthly firmwide social events (bowling, putt-putt tournament, video game night, annual picnic, etc.)” and “quarterly analyst/associate events (e.g., paintball).” Another tells of “a black-tie holiday gala with a rooftop reception overlooking the White House.” A colleague succinctly observes, “The Christmas party is ridiculously awesome.” There are also concessions on nights when work runs late. An analyst notes, “If you have to work past 8 p.m. any given night, you are allowed to buy dinner and are reimbursed.” Some benefits are more indirect, as one forward-thinking source has figured out. “Dean has three companies that have spun off of it in the last five years—an energy trading company, a hedge fund and an exchange. This allows you to switch careers if you want to try something new without needing to apply for jobs.”

As for the mighty dollar, there’s good news and bad. A recent hire says the company is “known to be higher paying for lower-level employees (analysts) than industry average, and lower paying for upper-level employees (associates/project leaders) than industry average.” Another source grumbles, “Compensation is good, but don’t expect to get any help with business school. I won’t say the company discourages getting an MBA, but they won’t provide you an incentive to return.”

Pick it up as you go

Dean hasn’t wowed its employees with training options. An analyst recalls, “Almost all training I have received is ad hoc, unofficial, on-the-job training. The firm is currently working on revamping entry training.” According to a colleague, “I’d say most training is unofficial, though new employees take part in a week of training/orientation and then a week of a mock case. You also will receive some business textbooks before beginning employment so you can brush up (or learn for the first time) on some basics, which really help with the onboarding process.” However, the respondent lets us know that “perfecting the balance and delivery of pretraining with the on-the-job training has become a priority for the firm.” One consultant looks on the bright side: “Our official training is not that great, but people are very helpful in the firm, so you can get good training once you start working with others.”

Hints of homogeneity

Being a small, one-office operation has resulted in limited diversity for the firm. An analyst admits that there is a “relatively small amount of women in the professional ranks, though the firm seems supportive and provides women with a cohort structure and small budget for planning events together. Having no women in upper management, however, makes it difficult to find female mentors and examples of leadership.” “They are very receptive [to hiring women],” another staffer observes, “but the numbers haven’t quite caught up yet.”

We’re also told there are “very few minorities.” A consultant logically explains, “Given the firm’s smaller size, there are just numerically fewer minorities,” and “there aren’t any special mentoring programs” for them. As for GLBT employees, a colleague says, “We have a small number” and, again, there are no special programs to promote hiring and retention. One analyst establishes the bottom line, stating clearly, “It does not matter if you are white, male and straight, or black, female and gay—if you excel at your work, you will be hired and promoted.”

Personal contributions

Dean leaves the charity up to its consultants. As one explains, “While the firm does not officially sponsor any community involvement, several employees have organized unofficial activities, such as tutoring in the mornings before work.” A colleague points out, with slightly more cynicism, “Charity does not translate into money.” Nevertheless, he allows, “some employees plan activities themselves, and they are well received by management.”

Droege & Comp.

405 Lexington Avenue, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10174
Phone: (212) 557-7616
Fax: (212) 557-6788
www.droegeusa.com

LOCATIONS

Düsseldorf (HQ)

New York, NY • Bucharest • Budapest • Hamburg • London
• Lucerne • Moscow • Mumbai • Munich • Paris • Shanghai
• Singapore • Vienna • Warsaw

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Systems/IT
Financial Consulting
Innovation/R&D
Maintenance/Facility Management
Marketing
Organization/Management
Post-merger Integration
Production/Supply Chain Management
Public Private Partnership
Purchasing/Procurement Strategy
Sales Strategy
Turnaround Management/Restructuring

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Managing Directors: Dr. Christian Horn, Dr. Juan Rigall &
Thomas K. Scheffold

2007 Employees: 300

2006 Employees: 250

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#18 (Tie) – Offices

UPPERS

- “Small-office environment with big-firm resources and projects”
- Diversified projects
- “Close contact to top management”
- A trip to Germany for the annual Christmas party

DOWNERS

- Limited efforts to build a strong brand name
- “Leadership could be improved”
- Micromanagement
- “Lateral thinking is not welcome”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Droege & Comp.
Attn.: Recruiting
405 Lexington Avenue, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10174
Phone: (212) 557-7616
Fax: (212) 557-6788
E-mail: recruiting_newyork@droegeusa.com
Recruiting Coordinator: Ms. Terri Harris

THE SCOOP

Results and outcomes

Droege & Comp. is a global consulting firm with operations in the U.S., Asia Pacific and Europe. Headquartered in Düsseldorf, it is the second-largest German consultancy, offering services in three broad categories—strategy, operations and turnaround—to clients in a range of industries, including automotive, construction, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, semiconductor, retail, aerospace, manufacturing, health care and medical devices, transportation and financial services. The firm is dedicated to practical action, and engagements are always oriented toward bottom-line results and tangible client benefits, such as cost-savings, increased revenue and corporate growth.

Droege was an early adopter of results-based billing, a fee structure that links payment to the completion of agreed upon goals. This approach goes hand in hand with the company's ideological methods, and Managing Director Dr. Christian Horn publicly proclaimed in a 2007 position paper, that the concept is a “win-win.” The firm's current contracts would seem to bear this out: More than two-thirds of its assignments are from repeat customers.

Territory talk

Droege has 15 offices worldwide, most of them in Western Europe, but enjoys a burgeoning presence in Central and Eastern Europe (through locations in Bucharest, Budapest and Moscow), as well as in Asia (with offices in Mumbai, Shanghai and Singapore). Droege's only U.S. office is in New York City. A group of 20 professionals at that location serves clients, often subsidiaries of European firms, from multiple countries, including Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Colombia.

The firm generally focuses on mid-sized companies with hopes of international expansion. Droege is able to provide expertise and resources, plus raw manpower that could not be harnessed internally by its clients. Engagements of this sort involve an evaluation of growth strategies and potential acquisitions, coupled with operational improvements. To speed and facilitate overseas expansion or sourcing, Droege can act as a general contractor of sorts, adding local knowledge to the project design and ensuring integrated business services.

Better, and not just on paper

In a past project, Droege was hired by a multimillion-dollar paper company that was struggling due to increased use of electronic records in its key markets. These issues were further complicated by its inefficient production processes, which hurt relations with continuing customers. Droege immediately designed and implemented an improved manufacturing process in the company's factories. It followed up with an evaluation of the company's suppliers, eventually finding a new supply partner, and devised a transaction standard that shared savings between both parties. The new contracts saved the client \$1 million, on top of over \$1 million in savings from improved production processes. Late orders were cut by four-fifths, and customer complaint calls fell off 90 percent.

Tweaking portfolios

Droege also has a specialized M&A practice serving global buyout firms, early-stage venture capitalists, midmarket private equity firms, and hedge funds investing either in private equity or distressed debt. The firm assists in raising funds from limited partners, performs due diligence and industry screenings, and advises on portfolio improvement. In addition, it consults on acquisitions and exit strategy when it comes time to sell.

Farther east than New York

Droege expanded its business into India in April 2007 with the launch of an office in Mumbai. The firm seeks to provide a bridge between Europe and India by dispensing advice to German companies who wish to invest in Indian businesses and vice versa. The firm's sector coverage in India includes automotive, pharmaceuticals, engineering and manufacturing. Asia currently represents 30 percent of Droege's

total revenue. With the addition of the Mumbai office, the firm expects that number to increase to 50 percent. At the time of the expansion, Horn stated, “We started our Asian operations 10 years ago and with our entry in India we look forward to be[ing] a frontrunner for German companies who want to invest in India, as the interest for investment in India is increasing in Germany.”

Elsewhere in Asia, the firm maintains a headquarters in Singapore and covers a broad region, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, China and India. In November 2007, Droege held a conference for more than 400 German companies to size up the challenges and opportunities in the Singapore market. The main points discussed were as follows: Local product development is essential to sales opportunities; German companies must partner with Singaporean companies for success; Vietnam and Malaysia are the next frontier of outsourcing; and the biggest challenge to German firms in Asia is the inability to retain skilled personnel. Time will tell how these findings will affect Droege’s future expansion in the region.

GETTING HIRED

Two’s a charm

We’re told that interviews at Droege “are typically conducted in two rounds.” In the first, “candidates receive two case-based interviews from firm consultants.” In the second round, there are behavioral interviews along with “another set of case questions with the partners/directors.” This round also “requires a presentation from the applicant” that is presented “to a room of consultants (three to four maximum).” A recent hire explains, “This process allows more people to meet the candidate, and it also tests presentation skills.” “Fit is a huge part of getting hired,” a staffer insists.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Have a drink with your co-workers

Insiders differ on what makes Droege’s culture distinct. Some say it’s “heavily German” with a focus on a “strong work ethic,” and claim that “everyone must carry his/her own weight.” Others note that the atmosphere is “competitive, entrepreneurial and driven by results.” A newbie states, “There is an entrepreneurial culture, with the opportunity to work on many projects—operations, logistics and strategy,” and adds, “I feel like I have the ability to think and work on the big strategic projects that affect the company as a whole.”

Others have a different take, and stress that the environment is “open, team-oriented and collaborative.” A senior consultant says people are so “understanding that the firm’s culture is a touch slower than you would expect from a boutique consulting firm.” A junior source remarks, “Everyone is really helpful and willing to answer any questions,” and a more senior staffer adds, “Everyone has a chance to contribute, and people are not limited to hierarchical roles.” “The New York office is a tight-knit and fun group that enjoys working together,” says a principal, and a senior associate consultant agrees with the tight-knit assessment, noting, “We are really selective in our recruiting to maintain this family culture. When the weather is nice, we often go grab a beer together in Bryant Park after work.”

60-hour weeks, your way

It’s worth enjoying those relaxed moments when they come up, since average workweeks hover between 60 and 70 hours. Keeping weekends free means late nights during the week, though these consultants admit that they’re no strangers to the weekend grind. And while the “days are long—at least 12 hours,” says a recent hire, “most people have no problem with me leaving to work out and come back. I am not tethered to my desk.” Others agree that it’s “very possible to balance work and private life,” providing “you manage expectations.” A senior consultant explains, “Nobody expects you to work on weekends if it is not an urgent thing, but you have to communicate if your plate is full!” And a colleague claims that “upper management is understanding of personal issues (within reason) and places quality/timeliness of the work above face time.” Respondents agree, noting that “there are no official office hours,” and “you are responsible for getting your work done.” Moreover, adds a principal, “the smaller scale of the New York office allows greater flexibility than would be found in firms where you are just a number.”

Of course we travel

Some staffers remind us that “consulting means travel,” and say “Droege is no different in this regard,” with at least four days a week spent on the road. But specific travel schedules “depend on project type,” since “operations-oriented projects demand extensive travel and client-site time,” while “market studies and some other projects can be done with a more balanced schedule of time in the office versus at client sites.”

One recent hire happily reports, “I have not been on a project outside of New York City yet.” Instead, she gets to enjoy the “cool” and “central” office in Manhattan that offers the “best view of the city.” On the other side of the coin, a travel-happy source is pleased to spend much of the week away, explaining, “I don’t have to deal with the high cost of living during the week and I get to socialize on the weekends—the best of both worlds.” A higher-up explains that “travel is typically domestic,” which helps to ensure that it “creates limited disruption” in personal life.

Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

Reasonably high base salaries with the potential for bonuses keep Droege consultants content, although there’s little in the way of extra perks. One staffer mentions a “relocation” bonus, and others note that the firm pays 90 percent of health insurance and offers a 401(k) plan. There are also “biannual firmwide parties/conferences in Germany and exotic locales (i.e., Mallorca, Spain),” and “the firm is willing to subsidize lessons for non-German speakers wanting to learn German.”

Get ready to get dirty

Additional learning opportunities are typically “unofficial.” A principal explains that a lot of training “is done within the context of a project. New hires are given the opportunity to work closely with more experienced consultants and learn from them. The office culture helps to enable this sharing.” Others agree that “you really learn consulting by being on project.” One staffer comments, “There is no guide out there that will teach you better than getting your hands dirty. When I first joined, I was immediately staffed on project, and it has been a whirlwind of interesting projects and cases ever since.” That being said, we’re told the firm also has “very extensive training material ... on anything from postmerger integrations to MECE concepts.” However, “you have to take the initiative to sit down and go through them yourself—no one is holding your hand.”

In this light, it helps that supervisors are “very hands-on, willing to listen to feedback and really interested in developing me in my career,” an insider opines. Plus, a principal states, “Droege offers excellent opportunities to interact with client management. Consultants frequently take on ownership of project elements, working with the clients’ managers to deliver results and presenting to senior client leadership.”

In general, staffers can expect to advance around every “two years” and, “if you perform well, you go up very quickly.” Promotions “are announced at scheduled events in June and December.” A principal explains that “there is no strict up-or-out policy, but poor performers will not last long.”

Mostly male

Staffers insist that Droege is a “meritocracy” and that “there is no prejudice or discrimination at all in the hiring process.” We’re also told that “Droege is a heavily male firm,” but a principal remarks that the “mix is reflective of the gender mix of applications.” A female source agrees that in the small New York office she has few female colleagues; however, she continues, “I don’t feel uncomfortable about this, nor do I feel like I have been treated differently because I am a woman.” A colleague adds, “A woman partner just had a baby and returned to work on a project part time ... she is expecting to get back into the process full time in a few months.”

Easton Associates, LLC

555 Fifth Avenue, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Phone: (212) 901-0999
Fax: (212) 901-2999
www.eastonassociates.com

LOCATION

New York, NY (HQ)

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Development
Due Diligence
Opportunity Assessment
Strategy

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Managing Directors: Robert Friedman, Michelle Hasson,
Kristine Lowe, Marie Cassese & Nicolas Touchot

2008 Employees: 45

2007 Employees: 40

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #3 – Hours in the Office
- #4 – Work/Life Balance
- #8 – Firm Culture
- #8 – Overall Satisfaction
- #11 – Best Firms to Work For
- #11 – Travel Requirements
- #17 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #19 – Interaction with Clients

Diversity

- #1 – Diversity for Women
- #8 – Best Firms for Diversity
- #14 – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- “I feel like I have a family there, that my opinion matters, that I can make an impact”
- Work/life balance is definitely attainable
- “Different types of projects covering a wide range of health care markets”
- “No BS”

DOWNERS

- “Can be too much of a clubby atmosphere at times”
- Not enough opportunities for “structured advancement”
- Very little in the way of formalized training
- “The politics can sometimes become annoying”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.eastonassociates.com/car.php

THE SCOOP

Small but potent

Easton Associates provides research and advisory services to clients in the fields of pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, diagnostics, and medical supplies and devices, as well as to investors who target the health care industry. The single-office operation, based in New York, is staffed by fewer than 50 consultants, but has carried out projects in Europe, Asia and across the U.S. The firm plans to open an office in London in the fourth quarter of 2008, giving it a base from which it can more easily serve European clients, as well as U.S. clients eyeing the European market.

Most of Easton Associate's senior staff members hold advanced degrees in science or medicine, on top of extensive business experience. To ensure accessibility to the market, the firm has also built relationships with personnel in the medical device, pharmaceutical, investment banking and medical venture communities, and maintains a database of local practitioners. Clients hire Easton for assistance in modeling opportunities in new markets, formulating business and marketing strategies, building alliances and performing due diligence on major potential undertakings, such as acquisitions and financing projects.

Phases and changes

The firm was founded in 2000 by Robert J. Easton and several other professionals (now managing directors) who had worked together at The Wilkerson Group, also a health care-focused consultancy. The Wilkerson Group was acquired by IBM in 1996, becoming IBM Healthcare Consulting, and though the group stayed on with IBM for several years, it ultimately sought the creative autonomy of its own practice. Easton himself grew antsy again, and in October 2006, he chose to leave the company to pursue his own new objectives in the industry. Easton's influence seems largely undiminished, as he continues to make speaking appearances at medical industry and investment events, and holds directorships at CollaGenex Pharmaceuticals and Cepheid.

Cut from the same cloth

The former Wilkerson Group founders who have stayed on as managing directors with Easton Associates include Robert Friedman, Michelle Hasson and Kristine Lowe. Friedman holds an MBA from the Johnson School of Management at Cornell, as well as an MS in chemistry from Columbia, and worked in consulting for nine years prior to Easton Associates' founding. Hasson received an advanced degree from the Yale School of Medicine and was with The Wilkerson Group for five years as a management consultant. Lowe, who studied postgraduate medical science at Harvard Medical School and the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, put in 18 years with The Wilkerson Group, also as a management consultant. Managing Director Marie Cassese, a former Wilkerson Group client, draws on her expertise as a senior executive in several multihospital systems in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Cassese has an advanced degree from New York University.

In February 2008, Nicolas Touchot, another Wilkerson Group alumnus, who had been with the firm since 2001, was promoted to managing director. Backed by 20 years of experience in European markets, Touchot is an expert on pharmaceutical and biotechnology products, particularly medical devices. His education includes a PhD in molecular biology and an MBA.

Making the scene

As a supplement to its work with clients, the company dabbles extensively in the thought development of the business. Consultants produce works of research and scholarship, and frequently attend major industry conferences to stay abreast of trends and changes. In July 2007, Easton staffers published an article, titled "How to Price Cancer Drugs," which discussed justifying price through the realized value of a drug, an act necessitated by competitors and required by buyers. And in October 2006, the firm served as co-sponsor, along with AstraZeneca, Merck and NI Research, of the Windhover Neuroscience Therapeutic Alliance Series. The event drew together neuroscience business and R&D professionals for discussion of possible drug commercialization partnerships. Easton professionals, including Robert Friedman, moderated a presentation on the top-10

licensable neuroscience projects, which evaluated the key attributes of successful projects, such as biological targets, clinical results and state of competition.

GETTING HIRED

Make your first presentation—before you have the job

A senior source at Easton Associates tells us the firm's hiring process "usually involves a first-round interview, followed by a day of second-round interviews, which might include five different sessions." In addition, "the second round will include a case that is prepared ahead of time." A recent hire comments, "The interviews are very laid-back and conversational and, at least when I interviewed, I didn't find anything meant to trip me up or confuse me." The case study, however, is fairly in depth: The insider explains that it "involves preparation prior to coming to the office. Essentially, you are asked to present a report that answers a variety of questions about a health care issue/device that can be researched beforehand and presented in a manner that the interviewee sees fit" (for example, in PowerPoint). Interviews last about "30 to 40 minutes each," and some staffers say there may be an additional "case to do on the spot." "In addition," says another newbie, "a prospect is usually taken out to lunch by a current employee in the same position and/or for coffee by someone with the same degree/background."

We're told that Easton doesn't have a summer internship program. For full-time positions, respondents note that the firm focuses its recruitment efforts "at Ivy League universities."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Happy about health care

Eastonites rave about the "familial, collegiate, welcoming and positive" environment at the firm. "Everyone at EA is excited about health care and is highly motivated to exceed the clients' needs," insists a senior associate consultant, adding, "EA also maintains a culture of camaraderie. It genuinely feels like a family." A recent hire agrees that the firm makes strong efforts to "celebrate birthdays and successes, and to keep each employee feeling as if he is a worthwhile and valuable team member." Plus, we're told, "co-workers will bend over backward to make you feel included and supported." There's also a strong "work hard, play hard" mentality. "Everyone is incredibly bright and works hard, but also knows how to relax and have fun," a research associate comments. Co-workers appreciate that the work is "intellectually challenging," but in a "fun and informal" atmosphere.

As one staffer puts it, "We have retained the closeness and fun of a startup, while also achieving corporate maturity and professionalism." Adds another, "It's a blend of the fast-paced intensity of consulting in midtown New York with the feel of a small-town organization."

Jump right in

Another advantage of the firm's small size is that "Easton always provides the opportunity to interact with senior management internally and at client companies (frequently CEOs)." In addition, staffers are given lots of responsibility from the get-go—A recent hire notes, "Within a month of starting at the firm, I was partaking in client meetings and becoming an active participant in the work." A cohort describes a similar experience: "In my first six months, I have written sections of final client deliverables, given sections of client presentations and conducted dozens of high-level telephone interviews."

On the flip side, "the bulk of the learning comes from on-the-job training and mentoring." As one rookie bluntly puts it, "The training is more of a 'monkey see, monkey do' mentality. When they hire you, they assume that you have the smarts to do it. So they throw you into the mix and teach you along the way." We're told that "EA is working to change that and to formalize more of the training," but as a research associate notes, "Given the collegiate atmosphere and friendly nature of nearly every individual

in the firm, it is very easy to have questions answered by those who have been there longer.” A longtimer adds, “The managing directors are often receptive to individual requests to attend conferences or courses that would build relevant skills or knowledge”

Up, but not out

The learning curve must be fairly steep, since “consultants advance relatively quickly up the ladder.” That being said, “promotions are less merit-based than some other firms,” reports a research associate, adding, “for my position, the first promotion is available at one-and-a-half years, and most people get that if they are on track with their development.” She continues, “EA recently added more [levels] to stratify the firm a bit more, and to enable people to have promotions more frequently and advance in different ways.” Most staffers are adamant that there’s not an up-or-out culture, or as one puts it, there’s a “constant ‘up’ path, but very little ‘out’ so far.”

Time for family and fitness

“Absolutely,” respondents answer when asked whether their firm promotes a livable work/life balance. Most say they average 50-hour workweeks and report that, even “during the most intense periods,” hours cap at 60. A managing director notes, “The firm makes every effort to accommodate the demands of my personal life, while maintaining absolute focus on an excellent quality work product delivered to clients.” A source explains, “EA is a small firm that places a high value on work/life balance, staffing projects adequately for the amount of work that is required, and encouraging employees to pursue their extracurricular activities with the same zeal as their work.” The insider says she regularly works from “9 to 6, except during crunch times leading up to a deadline. In New York, particularly in consulting, that is rare, and a treasure.”

Others agree that they are able to spend plenty of quality time with their families or on other pursuits. “We have a significant number of new parents, all of whom receive substantial moral support,” a research associate tells us. A principal comments, “The firm lets me take the time I need for my family (we have a son who is autistic),” and a colleague reports, “I am a single parent with two children. The firm is extremely flexible and supportive of my needs.” Another satisfied source notes that he has been “able to run several half-marathons and train while working at EA.” Moreover, consultants have the “ability to occasionally work from home.”

Work that feels like leisure

That’s not to say that there aren’t times “when projects are coming up on deadline and the hours get a little crazy.” Some say it’s up to the employee to secure balance for himself: “To ensure an appropriate work/life balance, you have to express your need to have one to direct managers,” an insider claims, adding, “If you do that, they will respect your wishes and do what they can to accommodate your schedule.”

But we’re also told that even when the hours pile up, often the work doesn’t feel like work. According to a respondent, “While the demands on time may occasionally be significant, generally the work is very interesting, which makes putting in extra hours very manageable.” A colleague goes so far as to say “the friendly, family-like culture often makes work seem like leisure.”

Travel’s a bonus

Staffers also say it’s “very easy to accommodate work travel with a personal life” at Easton, as “we do not settle in with our clients.” It helps is that “many of our clients are local,” so trips that do pop up usually “do not involve air travel or overnight stays.” That’s not to say that long-haul flights are never involved: “I have gotten to go to some great places in my time at EA—including Asia and Europe,” says a senior source. But generally, consultants travel only “often enough to make life interesting (once a month).”

One source, happy with her travel demands, comments, “I think the travel that I’ve had to do has been great so far. At most, I travel two or three days, and then work for the next few weeks at the office. The travel keeps me excited and engaged in the project, while working the rest of the time at the office keeps me focused and allows me to draw on the experience of my co-

workers.” Plus, adds a recent hire, it’s a bonus that “all expenses are covered” while on the road. A colleague notes that even the minimal travel requirements can be avoided, if necessary, explaining that, “in many cases, the entire team is not needed to go to meetings/conferences, so if something in life conflicts with that travel, you don’t have to put it on hold, but you can choose whether or not to go. Not always, but certainly much of the time.”

Keeping positive about pay

The upbeat attitude persists when it comes to compensation, even though some say “salaries fall on the lower end of the spectrum” in the industry, and the firm “does not have bonuses as high as many firms.” One insider opines, “I would say that, given the hours we work and the demands on us, the compensation is more than adequate, and certainly enough to live comfortably in Manhattan.” A colleague comments, “As you climb up the ladder, the firm does offer profit sharing and equity in the firm. They are committed to making us feel as if we not only work here, but are a part of the company as well.” There’s also a “1 percent 401(k) match” and “spot bonuses are given approximately four times a year to a small number of individuals (usually one or two) who have gone above and beyond the work required of them.”

Easton also offers “great health coverage” and a discount gym membership. There are “lots of firm bonding events,” including “happy hours from time to time, a monthly birthday party, wine classes, silly contests and competitions (specifically, pie-eating competitions), and summer picnics. The “company athletic teams” also give staffers a feeling of camaraderie. We’re also told that at the “annual holiday party, the managing directors like to sing a song they write,” and “all new employees must perform a skit”—we hear that “neither the skit nor the party have ever failed to impress in hilarity or wildness.” On a more serious note, on Mondays, “an EA consultant presents an interesting project they are working on, or an outside speaker comes in to discuss relevant topics; lunch is always provided.” And in general, there’s “lots of food” to be had—the office has a “great kitchen with a plentiful supply of snacks.”

A feminine focus

Insiders say that “probably half of the consulting staff” at Easton are female, including “three of the four founding partners and all of our support staff.” A senior source comments, “It has never crossed my mind that being a woman would have any negative impact on my career at EA.”

The firm isn’t as obviously diverse in other respects, however; in fact, a consultant claims, “minorities are underrepresented at Easton.” Others say that although “there is certainly no discrimination against minorities,” it’s nonetheless the case that “there are no specific programs to target minorities.” Still, insists a staffer, “The firm will hire anyone whom they feel can get along with the group, do the work and have a good time doing it.” Another reports, “We have several Asian and Indian employees—certainly more than 10 percent of the firm.”

Similarly, “there is no active effort to specifically recruit GLBT individuals.” “In general,” comments a research associate, “we have a very accepting environment toward all.” A respondent notes that when she brought her partner to the company Christmas party, “no one even batted an eyelash, and my partner was treated with such respect and welcomed by everyone—consultant to managing director—that I knew right there I had made the right choice in where to work.”

Reaching out

Consultants appreciate that “the job affords the time to” give back to the community. “We donate to charities every year,” an insider reports, “and we are annual participants in charity walks and runs. We also do food and clothing drives.” In particular, the firm participates in the Revlon Run/Walk for Women, and supports causes such as breast cancer awareness and autism. Many initiatives are “employee-organized” as well. A research associate notes, “Individuals at the firm are involved in a number of charities—we’ve held charity poker tournaments and karaoke nights.”

Giuliani Partners LLC

5 Times Square
New York, NY 10036
Phone: (212) 931-7300
Fax: (212) 931-7310
www.giulianipartners.com

LOCATION

New York, NY (HQ)

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Security
Corporate Strategy
Crisis Management
Emergency Preparedness
Financial Management
Private Equity
Public Safety
Risk Assessment & Mitigation

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: Peter J. Powers
2008 Employees: 50
2007 Employees: 60

UPPER

- With a name like Giuliani ...

DOWNER

- No room for entry-level (or even midlevel) candidates

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Phone: (212) 931-7300
E-mail: info@giulianipartners.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Highly regarded in some circles"
- "Secret society"
- "Very specialized"
- "Only for show"

THE SCOOP

Consolation prize

Giuliani Partners LLC was founded by Rudy Giuliani in 2002, not long after he ended his two terms as mayor of New York City. Because Giuliani gained such a strong reputation for dealing with crises while mayor, his firm has focused on helping clients improve their security, emergency preparedness and crisis management, as well as offering more standard advice in corporate strategy. Since Giuliani the firm is an extension of Giuliani the man, its literature looks more like a politician's than that of a typical consulting firm. For example, its core values are listed as integrity, optimism, courage, preparedness, communication and accountability. The firm is based in New York City, and has made almost no attempts to expand.

Fast out of the gates

Teaming up with Ernst & Young, the firm used Giuliani's name recognition and contacts to start off with tremendous success. Right off the bat, Giuliani brought some big names on board, including Thomas Van Essen, former commissioner of the NYC Fire Department; Richard Sheirer, former Emergency Management commissioner and director of NYC Homeland Security; Michael D. Hess, an attorney for the federal government; Pasquale D'Amuro, a highly regarded counterterrorism expert who had worked for the FBI for 26 years; and Joseph Volpe, the 16-year director of the Metropolitan Opera. Within just a couple of years, the firm reportedly had annual revenue of over \$100 million, and the ex-mayor earned the 2002 Consultant of the Year title from *Consulting* magazine.

Giuliani "Partners" is a little inaccurate

However, a firm that lives by the Giuliani dies by the Giuliani, and as the 2008 presidential campaign started up, the big guy had found a shinier toy to play with. In the early stages of his campaign, Giuliani announced that he had largely removed himself from the day-to-day operations of the firm. In February 2008, a Giuliani executive revealed some tidbits to *The New York Times*, such as, "[The firm] clearly suffered during the campaign ... as Mr. Giuliani's attention was focused elsewhere." Revenue sagged, as did the client list, and the number of employees fell from 60 to 50. Founding members, including Volpe and Van Essen, began jumping ship. Giuliani Capital Advisors LLC, a subsidiary that was an attempt to expand into investment banking consulting, was sold off to Macquarie Group in March 2007.

Meet the press

Of course, the firm was (and is) at a certain disadvantage compared with competitors who don't have to worry as much about their depiction in the media. One reason Giuliani distanced himself from the firm was because his continued presence acted as a lightning rod for potential image problems. In addition, some executives at the firm seemed nervous that the higher media interest was making clients leery. One controversial former client that would have preferred to avoid headlines is Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, an extremely addictive and abused pain medication. Purdue was slapped with hundreds of millions in fines in May 2007 for misleading the public about the drug's risk of addiction.

Giuliani Partners has gotten into some muddy water of its own. While campaigning, Giuliani often spoke of his support for electronic monitoring devices on the border with Mexico, but didn't say that his firm was a part owner in SkyWatch LLC, a company that made those devices. Perhaps sensing the delicacy of the issue, the firm eventually gave up its stake in the company without being compensated. In another engagement, the firm advised Broadwater Energy on its plan to build a natural gas terminal in Long Island Sound. Right away, the terminal was criticized as a peril to the coastal environment and a perpetuation of the country's dependence on foreign oil. Moreover, only 15 percent of the stored gas was to be used on Long Island, giving the community a burden without a comparable benefit. In April 2008, the governor of New York said he would not approve the plan.

Back to business?

Now that Giuliani's run for the White House is over, he has said that he will get back to work at the firm, but executives there have been openly questioning his commitment, considering how many other possibilities he has. For example, Giuliani is also a partner at the law firm of Bracewell & Giuliani, and he will certainly be kept busy helping Republican Senator John McCain vie for the presidency. However, the ex-mayor still remains an intensely well-connected figure, and there will be many who desire the access that he provides. Joseph Kornik, editor-in-chief of *Consulting* magazine, has said that the issue is not whether Giuliani will be able to rebuild the firm, but simply whether he wants to. The firm officially insists that the quality of its work will overcome any bad vibes from the failed presidential bid and that, in the long-term, all will be forgotten. Of course, even if things improve with more involvement from Giuliani, he's rumored to be thinking about running for another public office, which would cut into the firm's fortunes yet again.

GETTING HIRED

The inner circle

Although Giuliani is no longer chairman and CEO of his eponymous consulting firm, Giuliani Partners is still staffed by a small, elite group of his closest friends and advisers. There is no career information on the firm's web site—that's because the firm has no entry-level or internship positions available. Only senior executives are allowed, and while the notoriously private firm provides few details about its employees, the majority of its consultants are former New York City administrators, officials and political insiders who worked with Giuliani during his years as mayor (and later, on his presidential campaign). Others have come to the firm from high positions in business or politics.

In other words, if you want a career at Giuliani Partners, you should either be a friend of Rudy, or someone Rudy wants to befriend.

Greenwich Associates

6 High Ridge Park
Stamford, CT 06905
Phone: (203) 629-1200
Fax: (203) 629-1229
www.greenwich.com

LOCATIONS

Stamford, CT (HQ)

London
Tokyo
Toronto
Singapore

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Finance
Equities
Fixed Income
Insurance
Investment Management
Small Business & Middle-Market Banking
Strategy
Treasury

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Senior Managing Director: John (Woody) H. Canaday
2008 Employees: 185
2007 Employees: 200

UPPERS

- "Opportunity to advance quickly right after college"
- Mentorship program where senior managing directors are paired with new hires
- "Active participation in all aspects of the business, including selling, analytics, consulting with clients and firm management"
- "Control over your own calendar for scheduling meetings"

DOWNERS

- "Lots of bureaucracy and politics"
- Little diversity at the consultant level
- "Slow cultural shifts"
- Lacks the resources of larger firms

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Lauren Seidman
Phone: (203) 625-5122
E-mail: resumes@greenwich.com

THE SCOOP

The power behind the throne

If most consulting firms try to cultivate an image of superheroes, Greenwich Associates goes for an image of the brilliant tinkerers back at headquarters inventing awe-inspiring new gadgets. Since its founding in 1972, the firm's primary mission has been to provide clients with unique insight into financial services, customizable to any particular requirements. Its research was originally focused on large corporate banks, personal trust services and corporate pensions, but over the years has grown to encompass almost every area of financial services that clients might be involved with. Recent beneficiaries of the firm's research have included Lehman Brothers, Morgan Stanley, Barclays, Standard Chartered, Northern Trust and Tesco.

Although Greenwich has purposefully stayed small and close-knit, it's been spreading its wings a bit recently. In 2007, it opened a branch in Singapore, and moved its headquarters from Greenwich to Stamford, Conn., in spring 2008.

Thousands of sidekicks

Greenwich doesn't believe in outsourcing its research. In addition to its internal staff, the firm touts its thousands of research partners, who are professionals at large corporations, plan sponsors and buy-side institutions. The firm interviews and tracks research partners in dozens of countries across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. In exchange for their help, research partners receive the intelligence that the firm acquires and generates from its surveys and analyses. This intelligence is produced in the form of white papers and other research on institutional finance, covering areas such as ratings and rankings of financial services providers, market trends and best practices, and peer compensation information.

Within corporate finance, Greenwich interviews 5,900 senior corporate finance professionals in 31 countries. In equities, it tracks 5,200 investors from 20 countries. For fixed income, it follows 4,000 investors in 37 nations, and in the insurance field, the firm conducts 35,000 interviews with risk managers, CFOs, treasurers, legal counsel and other professionals working in insurance and risk management. Within investment management, nearly 3,000 U.S., Canadian and European pension funds, foundations, endowments and other institutional funds are tracked, in addition to 75 consultants in 18 countries. Middle-market and small business-market studies are conducted on alternate years, and consist of interviews with nearly 25,000 U.S. companies. (Small business is defined as having annual sales of \$1 to \$10 million, and middle market refers to annual sales of \$10 to \$500 million). The activities of 8,500 treasury professionals from 37 nations are tracked to provide the best treasury research.

Cutters are for cookies

Greenwich makes a point of emphasizing the customizable nature of its research. With custom research, the firm attempts to "collect, monitor and act upon client data at close to a real-time basis." It claims its custom research finds the answers to four fundamental questions. First, how are the client's customer needs changing? Second, how is the client doing relative to its competitors? Third, if the client is not performing to expectations or potential, why not? And finally, what does the client have to do to reach its potential? Some areas in which the firm performs custom research are strategy formulation, strategy measurement, market trends and customer behavior, and competitive position.

Research for the masses

Not all of the firm's research is restricted to research partners and clients. In April 2008, for example, major media outlets publicized a Greenwich study, which demonstrated that losses at global banks have influenced the amount of capital available to the companies that drive economic growth. The firm polled almost 300 major companies around the world to find out how the credit crisis has affected them. Throughout 2007, as the turmoil surrounding hedge funds roiled financial markets, major media outlets like *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* turned to Greenwich for analysis.

GETTING HIRED

Create your own summer job

Insiders say the “very thorough” hiring process at Greenwich “involves extensive one-on-one interviews” with “multiple partners and consultants”—usually as many as “six or seven” all in one day. One staffer mentions that a “case study is required” for applicants at the research associate (entry) level, adding that “candidates tend to stress about this.” However, cases aren’t a guarantee; another insider comments that, as far as he’s aware, “we don’t use the traditional case method in interviewing.” Candidates may also be asked for references.

A managing director remarks, “We consistently recruit at top business schools, but only make a small number of offers.” There’s no “formal program” for summer internships, but that shouldn’t dissuade anyone from trying to participate in one: Sources say it just “needs to be initiated by the candidate.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Winning over the family

Insiders say Greenwich has a “collegial and team-oriented” atmosphere. Employees are referred to as members, and the firm is “genuinely member-focused.” One associate says that even family members of employees are made to feel welcome. “While I was being recruited,” he recalls, “my wife and I were invited to dinner with a partner in order to make sure she was comfortable with the firm.”

There’s also a strong “entrepreneurial” spirit, and staffers “are expected to show independence and initiative.” A managing director notes, “People work hard, but have fun.” And another agrees, “The culture at GA can seem laid-back on the surface, but that shouldn’t be taken to mean that consultants at all levels don’t work extremely hard.”

Full of flexibility

Because there’s a “very flexible work schedule” and staffers can work at home, insiders say it’s “absolutely” possible for them to balance the job with outside commitments. One respondent with a 55-hour workweek notes, “Despite working a good number of hours, I have a decent amount of flexibility around my work schedule, and I have been able to balance my career at GA with hobbies (early-morning rowing on the Long Island Sound) and demanding volunteer work.” Another says that “work demands ebb and flow, but peaks are visible well in advance and can be planned around.” As one insider points out, “Work is expected to be completed well and on time, regardless of where or when it is completed.” For one director, that means “I tend to balance my workload and personal life by trying to catch up in the evening or on the weekends, but this allows me to do things with my son and wife.”

Everyone pitches in

Most staffers report spending about 10 weekends a year on the job, with a few saying the number can creep up toward 20. And on average, workweeks hover around a manageable 50 hours. A staffer who tops out at a 60-hour week comments, “Coming from Wall Street, this has been a welcome decrease in overall time spent at work.” A colleague agrees that the hours “could be much worse,” adding, “My experience has been that no matter how hard I’m working, the senior people above me are working equally hard, which helps me feel better about it!”

Clients come back for more

GA is focused on “building lasting client relationships,” which means “projects are never really completed and keep being revisited.” In fact, says a longtimer, the firm has “95 percent-plus repeat rates of clients every year.” A managing director explains, “Our engagements are based on research and consulting programs delivered each year. They are not like a typical consulting firm that is on-site for weeks or months at a time.” Nonetheless, as the firm has domestic and international clients, there’s still plenty of travel involved, especially for higher-ups: “At the research level, travel is almost nonexistent,” but “as soon as you begin working with clients, it ramps up quickly.” However, we’re told, “this should ease up a bit as we grow our global offices.” Few staffers report spending more than two days a week on the road, prompting one managing director to insist that, “relative to other consulting firms, our travel is more manageable.” He adds, “Consultants control their own schedules and set meetings. This provides flexibility for family activities.” Plus, most travel occurs “on Tuesday through Thursday, with consideration given to weekends being personal time.”

Better salaries for supervisors

Although top-level staffers tend to travel more, they also tend to be more satisfied with their salaries. A client associate remarks, “Compensation could be better at my level. Most research associates that leave tend to make an extra 20 percent or more in base salary than they made here.” He also notes, “Our bonus ranges also seem low, relative to what I hear from other firms.” However, a staffer higher up on the ladder feels that the firm is a “meritocracy,” with a “client-delivered value-based system that rewards those creating significant value.” A director explains that, “when you get to certain senior management positions, you can achieve a small ownership share that has a cash bonus and vests over time, and is paid on the earnings of the firm.” There is also a firmwide profit-sharing program, which we’re told averages “7.5 to 15 percent,” as well as a 401(k) plan.

In other perks, Greenwich offers “good vacation” and “good medical and dental coverage” (specifically, “an employee currently only pays 20 percent for medical and zero for dental”). Recently, the firm instated “two weeks of paid paternity time for new dads,” and a staffer reports that he was able to “get a two- to three-month leave of absence (unpaid) to work for a nonprofit I started.” He continues, “Partners are accommodating to requests like these and clearly value the time I’m spending to build a career here at GA.”

Giving back

In addition to supporting staffers in their nonprofit pursuits, Greenwich itself is “very committed to giving back to the community.” The Greenwich Associates Internal Volunteer Effort (also known as GIVE) looks for “charitable organizations and other opportunities for the firm to donate funds and time,” such as Habitat for Humanity. The firm also “helps members raise money for their favorite charities by sponsoring jeans days (pay \$5 to wear jeans one day),” gives members paid time off to volunteer and sponsors clothing drives.

Joined at the hip with a mentor

Greenwich will also pay for graduate-level courses for its consultants, and offers assistance in getting into MBA programs. In addition, there’s a fair amount of training offered at the firm itself, which has become “significantly more structured in recent years both in terms of internal training and opportunities to take external courses for skill development.” New hires participate in “two weeks of internal training at the start of the job.” Plus, a director explains, “We have the opportunity to take formal training courses, but our VP of learning and development also brings training to the office. These are usually on a multitude of topics, financially related and otherwise.”

On the informal side, a managing director notes, “New consultants are joined at the hip with a senior managing director from day one, learning the craft from their side (sales, consulting, analysis, industry trends, client relationships, etc.) This is very unique and a tremendous experience.” The partnership lasts for “six months or so.” Given that new hires spend so much time with their supervisors, it’s lucky that higher-ups get favorable marks. We’re told that “supervisors (managers) are good and well-respected.”

Building a career, here or elsewhere

There's also a reasonably quick journey up the career ladder at Greenwich. A longtimer explains that the "typical path from associate to managing director is eight years," which averages out to "two to three years per consultant level." However, "promotion is not up or out." A respondent indicates that "criteria are set in advance to qualify for promotion," and "annual reviews include objective-setting, so that steps needed for advancement are clear."

Staffers also appreciate that they are given plenty of "opportunities to interact with top-level management," both inside the firm and out. One junior source attests, "I frequently find myself in meetings with senior executives at client firms that are far above what I would expect, given that I'm less than three years out of college. This is one of the huge perks and opportunities available to aspiring consultants." Furthermore, he continues, "the breadth of knowledge I've been able to build from interacting with senior management at so many of the largest institutional asset managers in the U.S. has been invaluable, and will be an asset if and when I want to go work for an asset manager."

Vying for variety

The company falls a bit short somewhat when it comes to diversity. In one source's view, "It seems fine for regular members and researchers, but diversity is all but absent in the consulting ranks. That said, the firm seems to be making efforts to improve, though we're not there just yet." A co-worker agrees, saying there is "good diversity at lower levels of the firm, but at the consultant level, more work is needed." Efforts are being made by the company to recruit both women and minorities, especially for management positions. As for GLBT employees, an insider believes it is "a nonissue, as far as I can tell. The firm seems very open-minded."

Health Advances, LLC

9 Riverside Road
Weston, MA 02493
Phone: (781) 647-3435
Fax: (781) 392-1484
www.healthadvances.com

LOCATIONS

Weston, MA (HQ)
San Francisco, CA

PRACTICE AREAS

Clinical Trial Strategy
Launch & Salesforce Strategy
Market Assessment & Forecasting
Mergers & Acquisitions
Partnering & Licensing
Portfolio Planning
Pricing & Reimbursement
Product Positioning
Strategic & Business Planning
Technology Commercialization
Valuation Financial Analysis

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Partners: Mark Speers, Paula Ness Speers, Skip Irving & Marie Schiller
2008 Employees: 60
2007 Employees: 50

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#2 (Tie) – Formal Training
#5 – Best Firms to Work For
#5 – Overall Satisfaction
#6 – Travel Requirements
#10 – Work/Life Balance
#11 – Hours in the Office
#12 – Interaction with Clients
#14 – Relationships with Supervisors
#18 – Compensation
#20 – Firm Culture

Diversity

#4 – Diversity for Women
#6 – Best Firms for Diversity
#13 – Diversity for GLBT
#16 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- “Small environment allows for greater responsibilities than those held by beginning analysts at huge firms”
- “The variety of projects gives consultants a broad background in health care”
- Strong official training and mentorship programs

DOWNERS

- “No offices outside the US”
- “You definitely need a car to get to work”
- “Stingy with expense and snack budgets compared to other firms”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.healthadvances.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Health and wealth care

In the strategic consulting arena, Health Advances (appropriately) serves the health care industry. Its staff, many holding advanced degrees in medicine, molecular biology, biochemistry and related sciences, advise clients on product issues such as development, clinical trial strategy, marketing, licensing and pricing, as well as broader corporate-based issues like mergers and acquisitions, partnering and financial analysis. Clients hail from many different subgroups within the health care field, including biotechnology, diagnostics, medical devices, nonprofits, pharmaceuticals and private equity.

Speer-headed

The company was founded in 1992 by husband and wife team Mark Speers and Paula Ness Speers, both from Bain & Company, where Mark had been a partner in the health care practice and Paula had managed an R&D specialty area. The initial focus was on early-stage enterprises. Partner Skip Irving came on in 1997, bringing with him experience from Arthur D. Little's health care practice, where he advised on strategy and performed portfolio analysis for pharmaceutical firms. Prior to that, Irving had been involved in venture capital for biotech startups. In 2006, Marie Schiller was promoted internally as a fourth partner. Schiller had been with the company since 1998, before which she had been a production scientist engaged in combinatorial chemistry, synthesis and production for ArQule, Inc., and, going back further, a project scientist in the area of drug delivery systems for GelSciences, Inc.

In January 2008, Margaret Kemp Carlson was named to the position of chief operating officer. Carlson comes to the role from Colliers International, a \$1.6 billion commercial real estate services company, where she had held the same title.

Germ IQ

The bedrock of the firm's work is its in-depth knowledge of diseases and emerging therapies. Through databases and a network of experts and industry contacts, HA consultants can confidently predict disease management paradigms, technology developments and clinical changes that will occur 10 to 15 years later. Given the relationship in health care of value to risk management, the firm believes sound judgments on the future of therapy are a requirement for making the best decisions.

To that end, HA's research and resources for knowledge must therefore be immediately available and verifiable. Its network of experts and contacts is made up of over 5,000 clinicians and researchers. The firm maintains a searchable library of courses of treatment for various diseases, plus company profiles, licensing deals and clinical paths, which it either prepares or collects from market sources. HA also conducts internal research studies on regulatory issues, reimbursement trends, disease management, technology and competitive developments. These studies utilize a variety of methods for gathering information, including qualitative interviews with physicians, health care providers, patients and industry insiders; quantitative tools, such as focus sessions and web-based surveys; and analytical tools such as revenue and expense models, patient epidemiological simulations and the Monte Carlo method (a computational algorithm that draws likely conclusions from random samplings).

Toward a healthy world

Acknowledging its responsibility to the community, HA engages frequently in charity and social-sector work. One of its founding principles calls on employees to commit one paid day per quarter to the completion of community service. HA has also partnered with a number of charitable institutions, including the American Cancer Society, the Greater Boston Food Bank and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Some of the firm's charitable relationships go even deeper. In October 2007, Skip Irving was appointed to the board of directors of the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, a nonprofit seeking a cure for Parkinson's disease within the decade.

Irving had been advising the foundation for several years on its partnership strategies with corporations to develop Parkinson's therapeutics.

GETTING HIRED

Meet the partners

Insiders say the hiring process at HA is "very straightforward," with "no special tests." A senior analyst comments, "Once resumes have been reviewed by the recruiting committee, candidates are selected for a 30- to 45-minute phone screen. After the phone screen, there are typically one to two rounds of in-person, 45- to 60-minute interviews in the office. Candidates have the opportunity to meet with consultants from all levels." Additionally, "partners have a strong commitment to recruiting and the firm tries to have every candidate interview with at least one partner and another member of the senior management team." A recent hire recalls, "I was amazed that, by the end of the process, I had been interviewed by four of the firm's partners."

Stoked about science

An insider comments, "Each interview involves a case component that gives the interviewee insight into the types of projects and cases at Health Advances." Some sample cases include: "Our client has developed a new diabetes drug that complements the current treatment paradigm in a certain way. Please explain how you would assess and size the market for diabetes, who you would interview, resources you would use, work methodology and a recommendation," and "A startup company has two products in different stages of development. What information would you need to help them decide which product to focus their resources on?"

A senior analyst advises that candidates should "think about the key components of the health care system and technology development before coming into an interview with Health Advances." He then adds, "Like any consulting firm, we are looking for logical, analytical candidates, but we also want to understand their interest and/or experience in the life sciences."

HA limits its formal recruiting efforts to Dartmouth, MIT and Harvard, but "welcomes other applicants." A number of current staffers say they "found Health Advances through a MonsterTRAK.com listing," but it's also possible to submit a resume through the firm's careers site at www.healthadvances.com/careers.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

A noncorporate corporation

The "casual" environment at Health Advances is "intellectual," "inclusive," "collegial" and "team-oriented," insiders tell us. The firm is a "meritocracy" in which "everyone is valued." One happy staffer who's impressed by the "very friendly atmosphere" remarks, "I would describe the firm's corporate culture as noncorporate." Others note that, "people genuinely seem to like each other," "everyone is willing to assist others," and "everyone is really nice and pleasant to work with."

We're told that the push for a family feel comes from the top. An associate explains, "The partners take great care in making sure we feel connected and function more like a family than a corporation." Plus, "partners will have BBQs and cocktail parties at their own home." There are also plenty of other co-worker get-togethers, according to an analyst who says, "Our social committee is very active and plans for events at least once per month for group bonding, including trivia nights, holiday parties, poker nights and other celebrations." He adds, "This past year, a few musically talented members of the firm started their own a cappella group, known as the HAcappellas, that has performed at several company parties."

Tip-top mentors

The fact that “all supervisors have open doors” also helps foster an inclusive environment. “HA top management definitely takes the time to get to know all analysts, and there is a lot of face-to-face time.” In addition, “supervisors and upper management are very interested in the personal development of all employees.” It helps that “project teams are built in a fashion whereby there is typically one individual at each ranking on the team.” An analyst explains, “This provides an incredible source for learning and visibility from day one in the company.”

And, an official mentoring program ensures junior staffers have support from above. A recent hire notes, “All employees have a mentor who is a member of the management team and serves as an advocate for the professional development of the respective employee.” Another newbie says of his mentor, “His door is always open and he is always willing to chat and discuss anything. He is a VP and is definitely busy, but he will either drop what he is doing to help or will make sure there is time scheduled shortly after to meet up. We go out to lunch occasionally to catch up on work and personal life.” Plus, adds a manager, “Partners here are always available for questions, support and general mentoring, even if they are not your official mentor.”

Training as a meet and greet

In addition to the mentoring program, there’s also an “official, highly structured” training regimen for new hires that runs for about a month. A junior source reports, “During the four weeks, there are 36 training modules (one to one-and-a-half hours each). Also during this training period, each new consultant is provided with a training project to complete and present internally to the company. During the last two weeks of training, you are placed on a shadow case to follow around another individual at your level.” Another recent hire adds, “The training gives the appropriate background for the health care industry, the U.S. economy, FDA regulations, intellectual property, pipeline research, sales and marketing, databases and more relevant skills for the consulting industry.” A senior analyst notes, “There is a strong commitment to training among the staff members here, and each consultant is responsible for at least one training module—allowing new hires to get to know the various areas of expertise among the veteran staff members, and for the experienced group to get to know the new hires.” After the formal program has been completed, we’re told that training shifts to being much more on the job.

Climb the ladder quickly

All this support means that staffers get to jump into meaty projects early on. “In my first six months,” a newbie states, “I have been given the opportunity to present to the client, which has helped tremendously with my personal development within the firm. If the team thinks you are ready, they are all for you trying new things.” Another comments, “Since my first months as an analyst, I have had incredible opportunities for interaction with our clients’ top-level management, and these opportunities have only continued to grow as my commitment to the company and my responsibilities have increased.”

And there’s no need to remain an analyst for too long. “Reviews are given every six months,” and we’re told that analysts, senior analysts and consultants “typically get promoted after one-and-a-half years.” Promotions at the associate level and above generally take longer. Still, there are no hard and fast rules, and “promotions are based on performance.” In addition, notes a manager, “for some, the option of staying at a given level for a very long time is perfectly acceptable if that person does not want the responsibilities associated with the next level.” A senior analyst adds that the firm is clearly a “meritocracy,” since “there are consultants at every level (including partner) who have worked their way up from the analyst level and have been rewarded for hard work, intelligence and commitment to the company.”

A focus on efficiency

It’s expected at HA that staffers at all levels will put in an average workweek of “around 50 hours,” although many report spending upwards of 65 hours at the office each week. “There is no such thing as ‘on the beach’” at the firm, claims an analyst, adding, “We remain busy, and there is always a project starting up when one ends.”

But hours are “logged weekly” and are “closely” monitored, and staffers say the firm looks for ways to minimize them. An analyst explains, “Like many consulting companies, some days are long and some days are short; however, we have a full-time employee watching our timesheets, which are reported to upper management on a biweekly basis. We’re told if we’re working too much, and we’re always coached on ways to become more efficient with our time management skills.” Weekend work is usually kept to a minimum—we’re told that “HA tries to keep weekends free.” And, an analyst adds, “any time I’ve worked on the weekend has been from home via VPN, not in the office.”

No need to cancel plans

Despite the “typical consulting crunches,” we’re told that “most team leaders make a concerted effort to promote work/life balance.” The firm “really stresses trying to work within the 50-hour workweek,” and makes an effort “to limit the amount of late nights.” One recent hire reports, “I am able to attend weekly classes at the gym and almost never have to cancel appointments that I make with my friends outside of work (which is a rarity among my friends at other consulting firms).” Another agrees, “I am definitely able to balance both a productive work life and a happy personal life as well.” He adds, “It’s encouraging to see that many of the upper management have younger children, and are still successful with their jobs and able to thrive in a consulting position—definitely not typical of a consulting firm.” A source points out that “the firm was founded by a husband-and-wife team who had been at Bain for 10 years, and who wanted the firm to have a culture that promoted working hard but also leaving room to prioritize spending time with family.”

Ultimately, it’s up to individuals to determine their loads, says an analyst. “I feel that this firm allows you to find your workflow,” she remarks. “If you are the type of person who wants to work in a focused manner and have the evenings completely to yourself, this is definitely possible (and is possible for me!). However, if you are the type of person who loves to continue working and thinking of work after hours, the work is interesting and plentiful enough to fit this flow also.”

Keep the suitcases for vacations

Making balance more attainable is the fact that “we do not typically work at the client site,” an insider explains. “Travel requirements are minimal,” especially “for lower positions.” Generally, trips are limited to “client presentations,” which come up “once or twice per case.” A senior analyst comments, “I find that there is enough travel to keep it interesting and exciting, but not enough to make me dread every business trip.” A colleague agrees, “Travel never feels excessive or unnecessary, which is one of the biggest strengths of Health Advances.”

Still, there are exceptions to every rule, and one associate notes, “We have had a couple of projects where consultants were traveling worldwide for weeks at a time.” However, those types of projects “are usually staffed with people who don’t mind it.” A manager notes, “Consultants are asked beforehand about assignments that would require travel beyond a day or two.” One longtimer who enjoys being on the road reports, “I have had the opportunity to travel internationally fairly extensively, which I enjoyed and learned a lot from.”

Combine work with a massage

Some say their daily commute is travel enough, as the firm is located “out in the suburbs.” “We are pretty much required to get a car to be able to get to work,” says an analyst, “since there is no public transportation route that goes directly to the office.”

Although “not fancy,” the office space itself is “pleasant,” the “personal cubicles are of more than acceptable size” and the “conference rooms for teamwork are plentiful.” And as the firm is growing, “we are currently expanding our office to take over the adjoining space and will be adding a significant number of offices for management, as well as additional desk and cubicle space.” At the moment, there’s a “full kitchen,” an “on-site cafeteria” and “a quiet reading room with sofas and recliners for when you need a break from your desk.” The reading room also has “two massage chairs,” and an analyst notes, “With a wireless connection, we can work from those chairs as often as we want!” The suburban location doesn’t seem so bad when staffers describe the “golf course next door,” which is good “for a quick trip to the driving range on a summer day,” and there are also “some nice running routes people take advantage of before/after work.” Plus, there are “showers available in the restrooms.”

Although there's "food in the kitchen," some respondents warn that the firm is "very cheap with expense budgets and snacks." Still, in other perks, staffers get a "BlackBerry," "Starbucks gift cards before Christmas," and "discounts on auto insurance and movie and theater tickets." Vacation days are supplemented with a standard "week off from Christmas to New Years," and days end "at 3 p.m. on Fridays in the summer." Plus, "being a health care consulting firm," an analyst points out, "we know a lot about health care and have plenty of in-house experts."

Decent salaries for a small shop

Insiders also report that the firm offers a 401(k) program with a company match and a bonus that's "a composite of targeted percentage of salary and company/personal multipliers." Most sources say the compensation package is "competitive," at least among "other health care consulting firms of similar size," but a senior analyst insists "it is definitely less than what one would receive at a larger, more general consulting firm."

Open to all

Despite its small size, HA gets high marks for its efforts to foster a diverse workforce. "Gender has never been an issue" at the firm; in fact, "nearly two-thirds of the office is female," with an even distribution among "all levels from the analysts up to the partners." One female staffer notes that these numbers may stem from the fact that "the work culture is so friendly toward working mothers." Respondents also say the firm has "done a great job recently of recruiting minority individuals." And, adds an analyst, "being the only GLBT employee in the office, I can say that I have found no prejudice toward me, whatsoever. The company is great and open to my boyfriend and me, and I do not feel like I have to hide any part of my life in fear of it hindering my professional development."

Committed to charity

HA strongly encourages community involvement—in fact, it "sponsors four pro bono days per year." Two of these are "mandatory and companywide," whereas the other two are allotted for "staff members to take off to volunteer for the organization/cause of their choice." An analyst adds, "People often e-mail out to the office about a charity that they are raising money for, donating to or running a race for."

Kaiser Associates

1747 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 900
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 454-2000
Fax: (202) 454-2001
www.kaiserassociates.com

LOCATIONS

Washington, DC (Global HQ)
Cape Town
Hong Kong
London
São Paulo
Toronto

PRACTICE AREAS

Benchmarking
Go to Market
Growth
Innovation
Mergers, Acquisitions & Divestitures
Organization Development
Strategy Development & Implementation
Supply Chain/Operations

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Managing Director, North America: Kevin Dell'Oro
Managing Director, Europe: Luc Deschamps
2008 Employees: 130
2007 Employees: 130

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #5 – Travel Requirements
- #8 – Work/Life Balance
- #9 – Firm Culture
- #13 (Tie) – Hours in the Office
- #17 – Overall Satisfaction
- #19 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #20 – Best Firms to Work For

UPPERS

- “Ability to take on ownership of engagement delivery very quickly”
- Limited travel and reasonable hours
- “Opportunity to get promoted to VP status without receiving (or before receiving) an MBA”
- Full spectrum of project types

DOWNERS

- “We often get confused with Kaiser Permanente, the health insurance company”
- Low compensation for the industry
- “Management’s persistent focus on evaluating decisions by numbers alone”
- Limited staff diversity

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Corporate Strategy Practice

www.kaiserassociates.com/join/consultants.html

Economic Development Practice (South Africa)

www.kaiseredp.com/new/n_4_1.htm

THE SCOOP

Corporate measuring tape

Kaiser Associates is a boutique strategy consultancy boasting both a corporate strategy practice (in North America, Europe and South America) and an economic development practice (in Africa, South America and Europe). The corporate strategy practice supports strategy development and implementation, growth, innovation, benchmarking performance and processes, go-to-market strategy, supply chain/operations, organization development, and mergers, acquisitions and divestitures. Kaiser clients include five of *Fortune*'s global 10 Most Admired Companies, six of the top-10 from *BusinessWeek*'s Global 1000, six of the top-20 among *BusinessWeek*'s Information Technology 1000 and four of the EuroSTOXX 50. Clients come from a broad range of industries, including aerospace and defense, chemicals, technology and communications, consumer products and retail, financial services, health care, industrial, media and entertainment, oil and gas, private equity and utilities.

Getting benched

Kaiser started benchmarking in 1983, two years after its founding. The firm claims to have been one of the field's pioneers, having published, in 1985, one of the first books on the subject: *Beating the Competition: A Practical Guide to Benchmarking*. Kaiser claims its advantages over other benchmarking companies are its depth and breadth of experience, knowledge base of leading practices, customized approach, "apples to apples" performance comparisons, actionable insights, proprietary results and a unique research methodology that provides hard-to-obtain data. To date, the firm has worked on over 3,000 benchmarking projects in the course of its existence.

Over time, the firm has evolved its services, slowly augmenting its ability to drive strategy, rather than merely identify metrics. While some portion of Kaiser's work still uses traditional benchmarking, it is generally only a component of a larger project. The firm now categorizes its services as addressing either strategy or strategy execution. The strategy category is focused on development and planning of strategy (including go-to-market, growth strategies, competitive strategy, etc.). Benchmarking may come into play since projects of this type often benefit from analysis of the external environment (competitors, customers, partners, channels and market trends). The firm's strategy execution services are more internally focused, as they address a client's organizational structure, processes, roles and responsibilities, and general operations.

Branch out

Kaiser was founded in 1981 by Michael M. Kaiser, who broke off from Strategic Planning Associates (which later became Mercer Management Consulting). The firm began expanding beyond Washington in the early 1990s; first came a Toronto office in 1992, then London in 1993, and São Paulo and Cape Town followed in 1997. In 2001, the firm built an office in Dubai to focus solely on economic development, but subsequently shut it down. Most recently, in March 2008, it established a presence in Hong Kong.

Global coverage

Kaiser seems very proud of its international makeup, and repeatedly trumpets the variety of languages spoken in all of its offices. It is very balanced globally, with single offices covering wide swaths of territory. Currently, the Washington office handles not only North America outside of Canada, but also Central America, the Caribbean and Asia. It also runs training, marketing development, information systems and finance for the entire firm.

London is the center of the firm's business in Europe and the Middle East, and has taken over the contracts previously handled in the now-shuttered Dubai office. The Toronto office is the headquarters for Canadian operations, especially in aerospace, financial services, consumer products, natural resources, communications and utilities. The São Paulo location concentrates on South American clients, with an emphasis on those in energy, communications, pharmaceuticals and consumer products and services; it also has a growing economic development practice.

The firm's Cape Town office is interesting for such a small firm. Kaiser moved into South Africa not long after international sanctions were lifted, and focused on helping the country's companies enter the global marketplace after being isolated for so long. Kaiser's early entry to the market seems to have paid off, as the firm has subsequently made a strong showing throughout Southern Africa. As the fountainhead for the separately run economic development practice, it is particularly involved with employment creation, export growth, small business growth and government capacity building.

GETTING HIRED

Grueling but still enjoyable

Insiders say Kaiser's two-round interview process "is fairly typical for a strategy consulting firm," and add that the "selection is rigorous." First-round interviews are held on campus or over the phone, and are a "combination of personality/fit and a brainteaser involving market sizing." The second round "is a daylong affair" during which candidates are "put through two different styles of case studies, a few more personality/fit interviews, and a writing test." They also have "meetings with individuals from every level in the firm," and lunch or dinner are usually involved as well. A source remarks, "It's a long day, but the interviewers make it fun and enjoyable." Plus, decisions are made fairly quickly—one recent hire recalls, "I got my offer two days later."

Kaiser launches recruiting efforts at "Northeast liberal arts schools" such as Middlebury and Bowdoin, and will soon begin looking at select mid-Atlantic and Southern schools. It also recruits at D.C.-area graduate schools such as UVA and Georgetown, but as one staffer reports, "In terms of MBA recruitment, there is some effort but it's largely ad hoc, and the true level of interest is generally low." This year, the company notes, it will expand MBA recruiting to Duke and UNC, although 85 percent of its hiring will still be directed at undergraduates for entry-level positions.

Summer positions are open for undergraduates who wish to test the waters. Looking back on her two-month internship that resulted in a job offer, a consultant states, "Interns are essentially treated as associate consultants, so the experience gave me a very good idea of what it would be like to work at Kaiser."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Daring to be different

Kaiser's "laid-back, very supportive and collegial" culture is "a breath of fresh air," says a managing consultant who had been immersed in a "rigid and conservative corporate culture" at a previous consulting job. Others feel Kaiser is "fair" and "open to new ideas and entrepreneurship," with a "focus on meritocracy and professionalism." A senior consultant notes, "The firm is very receptive to hearing your voice and ensuring that the firm is successful in meeting your needs and the needs of its clients," continuing, "As a young group of consultants, we are constantly learning from each other and inputting our ideas to carry the firm forward." Another agrees that Kaiser is "highly focused on consultant development and delivering the client value." Plus, remarks a recent hire, "managing clients and making decisions about work is generally a much more open process than at larger firms, which is a great asset in the consulting industry."

Small-size firm, big-time clients

We're also told that "the people working here genuinely like each other" and are "fun and friendly." "We are a small firm," explains a managing consultant, "and everybody is on first-name basis. We attend happy hours together, and our group of friends overlaps extensively with our group of co-workers." A colleague agrees, summing up the firm thusly: "There is a work hard, play hard atmosphere here at the office, where people tend to keep their noses down during the work day, but enjoy getting

together for happy hours, etc.” And despite Kaiser’s diminutive size, it nonetheless “serves high-level clients and brands that are common household names.”

Easy access to higher-ups

Camaraderie among staffers exists across levels in this “very flat organization,” and the “senior staff is very open to communication with junior staff.” “I work on a daily basis with our firm’s managing director/senior partner, and consider him a friend and mentor, as well as a boss,” raves one staffer. Others agree that “interaction with senior leadership is quite informal and usually accessible,” and “managers and VPs at Kaiser are very easy to reach—I have daily contact with them.” Overall, a recent hire finds, “the managers and leadership here are extremely smart, extremely hardworking and extremely skilled at managing young, ambitious consultants.” As a result, “even the most junior-level staff have the opportunity to be involved in client presentations and client management.” Respondents agree that “interaction with clients is quite open,” although some warn that specific client involvement “really depends on the size of the team.”

Train on the job, not in the classroom

Some sources also note that “the leaders of the firm put a large focus on professional development,” though we’re told this emphasis largely comes in the form of mentoring. “Mentoring is a very active role at Kaiser, much more so than at my previous firm,” says an experienced hire. “The bulk of what we learn is acquired on the job,” agrees a colleague, adding “This is the way it should be.” Others believe that “training could be improved,” since “after the initial training period offered upon being hired, classes are usually nonexistent.” “Fund allocation to this area is quite low, as is its prioritization,” a managing consultant notes.

Golf handicaps don’t help with promotions ...

Nonetheless, there’s plenty of opportunity to learn by doing. It’s possible to “learn a lot about business in a very short time,” especially because of the diversity of projects. “Every day is different,” says one recent hire. Plus, staffers “assume positions of significant responsibility much earlier in our careers than perhaps at other firms,” a source reports. “For example,” he shares, “two years out of college, I am leading projects for clients, presenting to C-level executives of Fortune 50 companies and managing teams of six to eight consultants.”

Co-workers agree that promotion “is on an extremely quick time scale,” with advancements possible “every year for top performers” and “every 18 months for good performers.” This “very structured promotion process is driven by the quality of work and the employee’s own growth interests and initiative,” and staffers feel it is “very transparent and fair.” A vice president comments, “Unlike other firms I’ve worked for, advancement is based on performance alone—and supported by very transparent criteria—rather than firm politics, your golf handicap, the color tie you wear, etc.” Staffers say there is no up-or-out policy per se, but “those who don’t get promoted ahead of 18 months generally choose to pursue other opportunities.”

... but neither do MBAs

In another plus, remarks a new hire, “there is no one telling you to leave or go to business school after two years. Your professional trajectory is completely up to you.” We’re also told that “entering the firm with an advanced degree generally does not guarantee an advanced promotion scale.” One managing consultant observes that “individuals can start to stagnate at the managing consultant level, since promotion becomes more difficult due to overcrowding” among higher-up positions. In addition, advancement at higher levels is often tied to the ability of a supervisor to drum up business, which may be out of a particular consultant’s control.

Leave early without penalty

Kaiser’s focus on being a meritocracy also means it is “not big on face time,” which means “there is no need to stay late just to show that you are staying late.” “People come and go as their work schedules dictate,” agrees an associate, adding, “Sometimes

I do feel guilty when leaving the office before 5 p.m., but there seems to be no judgment.” A colleague echoes, “I have two kids, so I leave when I am finished up for the day and log on from home to take care of any more work, and nobody has had any problems.”

Average workweeks tend to be about “50 to 60” hours, although they “can be as low as 40,” and most staffers say they are manageable. As one associate puts it, “Typical workweeks vary across consultants and projects, of course, but the hours are very reasonable and actually a lot better than I anticipated.” Another says, “If there’s a crunch and work needs to get done, it needs to get done no matter what time of night or what day of the week it is,” but adds that “managers do all they can to avoid these situations and recognize the value of a livable work/life balance.” Weekend work does pop up at times, but not on a regular basis. “For the most part,” reports a recent hire, “I’m out by 6 p.m. each night, at the latest, and I’ve never had to work past 7:30. I rarely work weekends, and if I do, it is because I slack off during the week.” Another agrees, “I rarely work late nights and hardly ever work on the weekends here.” Of course, a managing consultant reminds us, “we’re expected to get our work done, but beyond that, there are very few restrictions on when and where we work.”

Rarely on the road

Spending little time on the road is an added bonus. An associate explains, “Given that almost all of our work is high level and strategically focused, we are able to do the bulk of the work from our home office.” This “lighter travel load is critical to my work/life balance. It is one of the factors in why I chose Kaiser, and they haven’t let me down,” a newbie remarks. A managing consultant adds, “We do get a chance to attend important client meetings, but these are not so frequent, and thus travel is something we actually look forward to. I travel around once a month.” We’re told that “at the consultant level traveling is mostly just for the kickoff meeting and interim deliverables,” although the “amount of travel increases proportionally with career level (as client relationship and business development become a greater part of one’s job).” But even higher-ups have an average travel load of only about “20 percent.” Meanwhile, notes one respondent, “for those who wish to travel, the opportunity is there (both domestic and international).” We’re also told “the firm is quite flexible on how consultants make travel arrangements and generally allow consultants to extend their stay, should they choose to do so for personal reasons.” There are also “potential global relocation opportunities” available for more experienced staffers.

The catch: low compensation

Despite the decent hours and easy travel schedule, most staffers agree that “Kaiser pays below industry standards.” As an associate puts it, “For what we do, I believe that we should be paid more.” A vice president feels that “while base salaries (especially at the consultant and manager levels) tend to be below the industry average, rapid advancement up the company food chain more than makes up for it. With each promotion (typically within 12 to 18 months), pay increases 25 to 50 percent.” But that rationale doesn’t satisfy everyone. A managing consultant rebuts, “Promotion schedules at higher levels are more closely tied to the success of VPs and their accounts; promotion for good work is not a guarantee. Currently, there is some discontent among managers and senior managers regarding this compensation scheme.”

In other perks, “profit sharing is available at the senior vice president (partner) level,” and Kaiser “pays for about one new VP each year to attend the MBA program of his/her choice.” Additionally, the firm’s “top performer program” rewards “high-performing staff with great development opportunities and events at great local restaurants and bars.”

Flipping over foosball

Staffers are also pleased that the firm’s office in Washington, D.C., is “in a prime location,” with “two amazing roof-top decks that are used for happy hours during the warmer months with a complete view of D.C.” Its proximity to the White House isn’t always a plus, though, since “Dick Cheney drives by every morning and they have to close the street.” “Most importantly,” exclaims one source, “we have a foosball table! This alone makes me love coming in to work every day.” Others add that the “kitchen is fully stocked with snacks,” and “Starbucks one-touch machines” keep them content. Dinner is also provided “if you work past 7 p.m.”

Caring about the community

Kaiser has looser pockets when it comes to contributing to the community at large. The firm's volunteer committee organizes regular volunteer events as well as annual gift-giving drives and charity donations. Examples include "mentoring low-income high school students in the community, painting a school's locker room and sponsoring families during holiday seasons." It also offers pro bono management consulting for nonprofit organizations in the area.

Be gay, but also be quiet

Opinions on the diversity of Kaiser's community are mixed. Some say that "at the lower levels, there is a good amount of diversity," but warn that "at the higher levels, it is, for the most, part white men." One openly gay consultant says "there is no outward disrespect toward gays and lesbians, but there are no efforts to be inclusive, either." He adds, "You can be gay, just don't make a big deal of it." As a colleague puts it, "Private lives aren't really shared at the office too much."

On the gender front, sources point out that "we have a high proportion of women consultants, managers and officers," and "several of the managers up through SVPs are women." And a vice president notes, "One of our two most senior partners is a woman."

Keystone Strategy, LLC

400 Oyster Point Boulevard
Suite 204
South San Francisco, CA 94080
Phone: (650) 873-2359
Fax: (815) 346-2491
www.keystonestrategy.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA
Salt Lake City, UT
San Francisco, CA

PRACTICE AREAS

Economics

Antitrust Economics
Commercial Damages
Employment & Labor Issues
Expert Testimony
Intellectual Property Damages

Strategy

Corporate Strategy & Alliances
Ecosystem Development
Innovation & R&D
Marketing Analytics
Workshops & Education

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Managing Director: Greg Richards
2008 Employees: 50 +
2007 Employees: 50

UPPER

- "The problems that we are asked to solve are very interesting and prescient"

DOWNER

- Opportunity for international work is more limited

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.keystonestrategy.com/careers.html

E-mail: careers@keystonestrategy.com

THE SCOOP

The naturalists

Keystone, a strategy and economics consulting firm, specializes in areas of business strategy, litigation and economic consulting. It serves clients in rapidly evolving industries, such as online advertising, biotechnology, software and others. Operating from offices in San Francisco, Boston and Salt Lake City, the firm turns to the languages of technology and biology to articulate the complex interchanges and relationships between organizations pursuing similar goals in a common market. According to Keystone's theory, entities sharing a business "ecosystem" mirror each other in production and innovation, and the established front-runner—which it identifies as a "keystone organization"—maintains the health and order of all parts of the whole. The firm's ecosystem strategies are designed to map and assess a client's business habitat, then provide the company with the necessary tools and direction to manage its resources within the environment, establish its place in the overall structure and, in the long term, remain "healthy."

Keystone also specializes in expert services, including trial testimony, expert witness reports and independent studies, for clients involved in regulatory review, intellectual property disputes and other formal conflicts.

Harvard minds on the payroll

The methodology and framework for Keystone's ecosystem strategies were created by Harvard Business School professors Marco Iansiti and Alan MacCormack, both affiliated with the firm as experts. Iansiti, author of the book *Keystone: Strategies for Managing Business Ecosystems*, studies the behavior of companies seeking to control innovation and operations within complex networked industries, i.e., business ecosystems. His work focuses on means of sustained profitability, value creation and operating leverage. MacCormack conducts research in a related vein, examining the management of technology and product development in rapidly evolving business spheres, such as the Internet software industry and the computer and server industry.

Back to school

It follows that a firm closely affiliated with Harvard and Wharton professors would take an interest in education. Keystone's workshops and education practice offers programs to hone the capabilities of a management team, especially in the area of critical thinking. Workshops, customized for content and length, involve a series of presentations on business theories and case studies meant to promote more effective decision making and leadership. Program topics have included business strategy, ecosystems and innovation, and R&D productivity.

Voice of authority

Of course, there is always the option of letting Keystone do the critical thinking for you. The firm's expert services practice fields a team of academics, lawyers and executives with pertinent experience in regulation and intellectual property. The team is capable of producing independent studies to support a client engaged in a commercial dispute, and can also take the stand to deliver trial testimony. Clients of this practice are usually high-profile businesses, government agencies and related third parties embroiled in antitrust litigation, mergers and acquisitions review, and intellectual property debates. Keystone believes such circumstances require reliable business analysis and detailed reports to inform judges, juries, regulators and legislators on sensitive matters of conflict in business.

Keystone tablets

The firm occasionally publishes books, articles and white papers both to raise its profile and to contribute to thought advancement in the industry. In 2006, Gary Pisano, another Harvard professor and Keystone expert, published *Science Business: The Promise, the Reality, and the Future of Biotech*, a book critiquing the biotech industry, which he considers one of the few pure businesses based on hard science. Also in 2006, Marco Iansiti co-wrote an article on organization design and effectiveness that appeared in

the journal *Organization Science*. A subsequent article, titled “Intellectual Property, Architecture, and the Management of Technological Transitions: Evidence from Microsoft Corporation,” written with contributions from Iansiti and MacCormack, appeared in the *Journal of Product Innovation Management*.

GETTING HIRED

Perk up in Pittsburgh

Keystone claims its hiring process is “unique” and “more scientific than you might guess.” Candidates are asked to e-mail a resume and a “thoughtful cover letter” to careers@keystonestrategy.com. The firm also insists emphatically that the “cover letter should specifically address each of the ideal qualifications” described on its site, including the applicant’s “exceptional problem-solving and analytical skills” and “outstanding relationship-building skills.” Plus, the letter should tackle what Keystone calls “the Pittsburgh Airport test,” that is, “something that gives us confidence that we wouldn’t hate being stuck with you in the Pittsburgh airport for more than six hours.”

A current staffer notes that the firm also recruits on campuses including “MIT, Stanford and CAL-Berkeley.” A colleague adds that the hiring process gives candidates “free-form opportunities to demonstrate their ability” through “phone interviews, in person interviews, a PowerPoint deliverable and case study questions.” No one was willing to share a sample case, but one staffer hinted, “I will say that you need to be able to parse fixed costs from variable costs and calculate break-even points as a starter.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Practically a second MBA

Keystone insiders say the firm is full of “smart people having fun solving interesting problems.” Staffers maintain “great relationships with all the partners at the firm” and “work very closely with clients, [getting] to know them quite well.” As a firm, Keystone also has “special relationships with certain business school professors,” which is a particular draw to “high-quality” candidates. A consultant states, “The ability to learn from these professors is like getting a renewal MBA on the job.” And in general, there’s plenty of learning to be had; we’re told that “in the last year, the firm has really increased its commitment to training.”

Skip out to the Sahara

When it comes to the job itself, work schedules tend to hover around “50 hours per week” in calmer moments, but can vary “widely, depending on the project and project cycle.” Weekend work pops up about a dozen times a year. Staffers say they are “on the road about 25 percent of the time,” although this can fluctuate as well.

Of course, “sometimes work schedules can be very hectic,” but when things get busy, there’s usually some relief afterward. Insiders claim “the firm is very conscientious of burnout after a big push for delivery” and, as a result, reports a San Francisco-based respondent, “it’s not unusual for a team to take several days off to decompress after finalizing a big project.” “Face time is not a priority,” adds another, “so when the schedule does not require long hours, they aren’t expected.” Plus, Keystone is “very flexible with outside commitments.” For example, a consultant shares, “one individual uses his vacation time to evaluate environmental impact programs all around the world. Another trained for and ran the Marathon des Sable, a 145-mile adventure race in the Sahara desert.” He adds, “Parents can go home at a reasonable time and finish up assignments in the evening at home.”

Pour yourself a cup

Keystone is also “very flexible with leave for new parents.” And while it has been able to attract women to the firm, sources tell us “the five partners are all men.” Nonetheless, an insider insists, “everyone has the same opportunity to advance, regardless of gender.” And what are those opportunities? Consultants note that “the firm does not have a strict promotion policy.” Rather, “the better an individual handles responsibilities, the more responsibilities that individual receives.”

And with more responsibility, presumably, the higher the salary that individual commands. Insiders are happy with Keystone’s “generous compensation scheme,” and say the firm is “extremely fair when dealing with its employees.” As additional financial incentives, Keystone offers “profit sharing that can be paid into a tax-deferred account,” as well as a bonus that’s “variable based on overall firm profitability.” We also hear that the “cappuccino machine is nice” and that “there are plenty of snacks and drinks available to the team,” as well as outings like “the occasional team lunch on sunny days.”

The Lewin Group

3130 Fairview Park Drive
Suite 800
Falls Church, VA 22042
Phone: (703) 269-5500
Fax: (703) 269-5501
www.lewin.com

LOCATION

Falls Church, VA (HQ)

PRACTICE AREAS

Actuarial Analysis, Capitation Rate-Setting
Empirical Research & Data Analysis
Health Care & Human Services
Program Design Options
Public Program/Demonstration Project Evaluation
Strategic & Business Planning
Surveys

THE STATS

Employer Type: Independent, Wholly Owned Subsidiary of Ingenix, Inc.

Executive VP: Lisa Chimento

2008 Employees: 100 +

2007 Employees: 175

UPPER

- Intellectual atmosphere

DOWNER

- Ongoing tumult from being acquired

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.lewin.com/Careers

THE SCOOP

Health and consequences

For 35 years, the Lewin Group's goal has been to help organizations improve their health care and human services. Within this specialty, the firm's stated purpose is to improve policy and increase knowledge; create, operate and measure programs to enhance delivery and financing; handle changes in technology, methodology and regulation; maximize performance, coverage, quality and results; and create effective strategies for institutions, communities, governments and people.

Areas where the firm particularly devotes its attention have included behavioral health, community health, health information technology and telehealth, hospitals and health systems, human services, long-term care, managed care, Medicare and Medicaid, provider payment, reimbursement services, special populations, the uninsured and safety nets, women's and children's health, and workforce management. Although it has a strong tendency to gather its clients from the public and nonprofit sectors, the firm also has a number of private-sector clients.

So you may ask, how did we get here?

In 1996, founder Lawrence S. Lewin sold his firm to Quintiles Transnational Corp., a clinical research firm specializing in pharmaceutical and biotech companies. Lewin continued to serve on the firm's board until his retirement in 1999. In June 2007, the firm was purchased from Quintiles by Ingenix, Inc., a health care information and research company.

Now for the twist. Ingenix is itself a subsidiary of UnitedHealth Group—the largest single health insurance provider in the United States. A word that comes up a lot in Lewin's literature these days is “objective.” This is probably to soothe fears about the firm being owned by a company that has such a massive financial stake in the direction of health care legislation. This issue became much more prominent in February 2008, when an investigation by New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo found that Ingenix had defrauded New York patients by setting reimbursement rates too low. Although Lewin did not have any direct involvement in the scandal, its association with Ingenix could have a negative effect on its reputation.

A fresh face

In September 2007, Lisa Chimento stepped up as executive vice president after the retirement of Ron Johnson, a promotion that put her in charge of the firm. Before this, Chimento was head of Lewin's section for state governments, commercial payers and providers. Ingenix says one of the reasons for this internal promotion was to showcase its longstanding integrity. That might be interpreted as an attempt to reassure potential clients that Lewin is beyond any meddling from the higher-ups.

Still keeping busy

As of this writing, it's too early to tell how the attorney general's findings in New York will affect Lewin's client list. Until now, however, UnitedHealth's ownership hasn't stopped the firm from maintaining a steady roster. For example, when members of a 2007 health care commission for the state of Colorado raised concerns about the UnitedHealth connection, Lewin had a special meeting with the commission and the Coloradans came away satisfied that their concerns had been adequately addressed.

Many of the firm's clients are looking for analyses of health care legislation, such as the company's December 2007 report on the Wisconsin Health Plan, a December 2007 market assessment and benchmarking project for the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and a June 2007 analysis of the federal Healthy Americans Act. Past actions that garnered particular attention in the media have been Lewin Vice President John Sheils' testimony on health care reform in front of the Senate Finance Committee, and the firm's widely cited 2004 comparison of the health care plans of presidential candidates John Kerry and George W. Bush.

GETTING HIRED

Have a look

The Lewin Group's careers site redirects job seekers to the site of parent company UnitedHealth Group, which maintains a database of all available positions. To search for positions specifically within Lewin, candidates should enter "Lewin" into the keyword box. Searches can also be narrowed by job function, location and business segment.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Cautious bunch

Insiders tell us Lewin boasts "lots of deep subject matter experts across groups," but counter that high note with one of caution: One source describes the firm as "a mixed bag," where there is "confusion between whether you are valued for your professional experience and content knowledge, or if you aligned yourself with the right clique." Opportunities for advancement, meanwhile, "are standard—every three years," a consultant explains.

Mercator Partners LLC

30 Monument Square
Suite 155
Concord, MA 01742
Phone: (978) 287-7500
Fax: (978) 287-7600
www.mercatorpartners.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (HQ)
Washington, DC

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Development Support
Business Unit Strategy
Campaign Mapping & Program Management
Corporate Strategy
Investment Evaluation
Marketing & Sales
New Opportunity Assessment
Organizational Design
Partnerships & Alliances
Product & Service Design
Strategic Planning Processes

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
CEO: Charles Gildehaus
2008 Employees: 25
2007 Employees: 25

UPPERS

- "Very flexible work environment"
- "Immediate impact potential"
- "Exceptional access to senior leadership," even for new hires
- As a small firm, there's a "lack of institutional bureaucracy"

DOWNERS

- "Little to no formal training"
- "Lacking the resources of larger firms"
- "No separate departments for research, production, etc."
- Charitable contributions are not a priority

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Lisa Burkholder, Recruiting Coordinator
E-mail: careers@mercatorpartners.com

THE SCOOP

ICT experts

Mercator Partners, a boutique consultancy with offices in Boston and Washington, D.C., offers strategic, operational and organizational consulting to companies in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector. The firm also advises private equity firms that invest in ICT companies. Marquee clients include Verizon, Sprint/Nextel, Sony Ericsson, Motorola, Samsung and AT&T, as well as other network operators, ISPs, incumbent telcos and software developers. Engagements are tailored to the needs of the client, and complete the entire cycle of strategy development to implementation and execution. Services address issues such as portfolio strategy, merger and acquisition assessment, campaign mapping and process improvement.

Sharply focused

Mercator emphasizes its team's experience in the ICT field, which it has inhabited since its founding in 1998. After a decade of evaluating similar problems and markets, and following the evolution of products and customer needs, the firm has assembled innovative frameworks and proprietary data sets. These data sets, detailing the available statistics and information on mobile devices, converged products and services and consumer behavior, are utilized in most of the firm's projects, and may also be made directly available to major clients. Among its recent contract work, Mercator has smoothed the customer transition for a multiple systems cable operator following a large acquisition; designed a market strategy for a media company looking to extend its brand and music content into the wireless area; and devised and implemented a portfolio planning system for a U.S. wireless carrier.

The house of Gildehaus

Mercator's partners set the standard for the firm's ICT expertise. Charles Gildehaus, a co-founder and the current CEO, has been a part of multiple successful mobile business startups, and he continues to serve on the board of several of these enterprises. Gildehaus has also worked with service providers, device makers and media organizations in profiting from the convergence of products and services across telecom, traditional and new media, and the Internet. Before joining the company in 2001, Partner Chuck Ennis was president and CEO of Roku Technologies, a mobile software and services provider. Prior to that, he was senior manager at TelePad Corporation, a systems integrator working in mobile and wireless deployments. Moe Kelley, promoted to partner in January 2007, has led projects for service providers, device makers and infrastructure vendors around the world. Before he joined Mercator, Kelley worked in the broadband and mobile industry for such companies as Global Crossing and MediaOne.

Where it all comes together

In a 2006 collaboration with CTIA, the international association for the wireless telecom industry, Mercator conducted a convergence study. The study made use of more than 30 interviews with executives of wireline and wireless telecoms, multiple cable systems operators, Internet service firms and others about the direction of technology, potential market barriers and ensuring the lifetime value of customers. The study built on the company's less formally organized findings from prior years to create a broad picture of executive perspectives on convergence.

GETTING HIRED

Light reading

Qualified candidates at Mercator will generally have at least one initial phone interview that's "followed by a full day of interviews" (usually three to four) on site. One recent hire adds, "I believe there is occasionally a third-round interview if needed." Others note that "interviewees are always interviewed by the managing partner," and that interviews consist of a mix of "case, experiential and behavioral questions." It may be worth brushing up on the firm's "recommended reading"—selections include *Innovator's Dilemma* by Clayton Christensen and *Predators and Prey: A New Ecology of Competitions* by James Moore.

On its web site, Mercator explains that it hires for three roles: associates, consultants and managers (who can work up to becoming principals and partners, the firm's top-level positions). Interested applicants are asked to e-mail a cover letter and resume to the careers contact. The firm actively recruits within the Ivy League and at other "top New England liberal arts colleges," as well as at Duke and MIT.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Friendly but demanding

Insiders say Mercator has a "very relaxed" and "open" culture that's "friendly" and "supportive," with "a high level of teamwork and cooperation." An associate consultant observes, "Consultants and partners alike are intelligent, respectful, hardworking and down-to-earth."

That said, the work is certainly "demanding," and it's "expected that consultants be available when client deliverable deadlines are approaching." Some staffers feel this means, in effect, that they are "expected to be available to respond to e-mails at all times." Most work between 10 and 25 weekends a year and tend to average 55- to 60-hour weeks. As a result, achieving a decent work/life balance can be tough. But others insist that the "hours are very flexible," and one consultant says he has "found it easy to work around other obligations and family activities." Another says of his 60-hour a week schedule, "Some of these hours are at home and not at the office," which makes them more palatable. Most agree that the firm doesn't place a strong emphasis on balance; rather, "employees are largely responsible for managing their own work/life balance."

Learning on the go

Employees are also responsible for taking advantage of opportunities to learn on the job. While there is "some formalized training" at the firm, "most skills are learned from working on actual client projects." And it's easy enough to dive in quickly, since "new consultants are given a lot of responsibility." Respondents tell us "junior people are immediately involved with projects working directly with partners and senior managers." A recent hire states that, "as a relatively junior member of the firm," he has "had many opportunities to meet with and interact with top-level clients," and to "frequently interact and work for the partners and principals in the firm." Staffers tend to "advance every 12 to 18 months," although a manager explains that "junior consultants are expected to stay three years before pursuing an advanced degree." Promotions to manager usually only come to those with MBAs.

Better than the rest

At all levels, Mercator's travel requirements are "minimal" compared to those at other firms. Although "travel varies greatly based on client requirements," it's nonetheless the case that "few projects require more than a few days of travel a month." One staffer is pleased whenever a travel opportunity does pop up: "I find the occasional client trip to be refreshing, and a great change of pace from the normal office routine."

Insiders report that compensation is competitive for the industry, and that the firm offers a “401(k) match” as well as “fantastic health and dental benefits.” One manager notes that there is also a “superior profit-sharing bonus potential.” Other perks include “paid dinner after 7 p.m.,” a “free cell phone and wireless data card” and a home “broadband connection.” Sources appreciate their “spacious, clean and well-equipped” offices. They are also allotted “generous vacation time,” including a “full week off during the holiday season,” and enjoy “frequent firm outings” throughout the year. In particular, the firm holds an annual “Mercator Games” that’s a “full-day event where everyone in the firm participates in an Olympic-style day of games and fun,” followed by an evening of “dinner and drinks in Boston.” One consultant raves that it’s “always a highlight of the year!”

Milliman, Inc.

1301 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3800
Seattle, WA 98101
Phone: (206) 624-7940
Fax: (206) 340-1380
www.milliman.com

LOCATIONS

Seattle, WA (HQ)

48 offices around the world

PRACTICE AREAS

Employee Benefits
Health Care
Investment
Life Insurance & Financial Services
Property & Casualty Insurance

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
President & CEO: Patrick J. Grannan
2008 Employees: 2,200
2007 Employees: 2,000
2007 Revenue: \$522 million
2006 Revenue: \$472 million

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#1 – Interaction with Clients
#7 – Compensation
#10 (Tie) – Relationships with Supervisors
#13 – Best Firms to Work For
#13 – Overall Satisfaction
#14 – Offices
#20 – Hours in the Office

Diversity

#10 – Best Firms for Diversity
#10 – Diversity for GLBT
#10 – Diversity for Minorities
#10 (Tie) – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- “The firm’s culture and reputation for excellence”
- “Interesting and innovative assignments”
- Regional setup leads to less travel time

DOWNERS

- “Too much work—sometimes quality suffers because of time constraints and client promises”
- “Individual office mentality can mean a lack of firmwide support”
- Lack of centralized sharing of information leads to repetition of work

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Visit the Careers section of Milliman’s web site

THE SCOOP

Enjoying the risk of being free

For a firm whose specialty is judging degrees of risk, Milliman is willing to take a lot of risk itself by giving staff a higher-than-usual degree of autonomy. But for over 60 years, that choice seems to have been paying off, and the firm now claims to be one of the world's largest independent actuarial and consulting firms. Although it has also expanded beyond actuarial services, the firm still likes its consultants to have a combination of both business and actuarial abilities. More than 1,000 of its 2,200 employees are qualified actuaries and consultants.

In 1947, Wendell Milliman and Stuart Robinson teamed up to found a firm to analyze business risk in Seattle. Originally named Milliman & Robertson, Inc., it was the first actuarial consulting firm based in the Pacific Northwest. The fledgling company, which has always been owned and operated by its principals, tried to distinguish itself from competitors by giving employees a great deal of latitude in making their own decisions, believing that this would lead to more creative thinking. This approach may explain why the firm was ranked as one of the 10 Best Consulting Firms to Work For in 2004 by *Consulting* magazine. The atmosphere of autonomy also extends outside of its headquarters, sometimes leading media to mistakenly describe Milliman branches as local firms.

Seattle confidential

Milliman is willing to provide its services to almost any type of organization, whether business, financial, government or union. Although the firm generally makes a point of keeping its client list under wraps, in March 2007, it announced that it had helped Fitch Ratings develop a new model for financial guarantors to track risk profiles. A few additional projects have crept to the surface, as well. In September 2006, the Mayo Clinic licensed the firm's Milliman Care Guidelines. Written by doctors and other clinicians, these guidelines are designed to match patient conditions with the best available care. And in 2005, the firm helped Swiss Reinsurance Co. during its acquisition of GE Insurance.

Spreading freedom in its own way

The firm's expansion overseas has been steady and strong. February 2008 saw the opening of an office in Sydney, Australia, which will focus on guaranteed retirement savings products. The firm considers this to be a relatively untapped market in the country. In January 2007, the firm bought out Acser, a Brazilian actuarial company that was prized for its client list of around 100 regional health plans. Lawrence Johnson & Associates, an Oakland-based retirement and employee benefits consulting firm, was absorbed into Milliman in August 2006.

The firm is also a founder of Abelica Global (which changed its name from Milliman Global in November 2007), a worldwide network of consulting firms that focuses on employee benefits, investments, insurance and health care. Each member firm maintains its independence, engaging with the network as an equal participant. In fact, the recent name change was implemented to highlight the independence of each member company. Abelica maintains offices in almost 100 cities around the world.

The proper tools

Milliman provides clients with a wide variety of software, studies and publications. For example, it claims to maintain the largest database of comparative salary information. Another proprietary offering, the Milliman Actuarial Retirement Calculator, helps organize pension plans by preparing election forms and notices, calculating benefits, producing annual benefits statements and more. And, annually, the firm's Pension Funding Study analyzes and compares 100 large U.S. companies with benefits pension plans (the results are dubbed the Milliman 100). The most recent study, released in early 2008, found that the proportion of pension plan assets invested in equities fell to 55 percent in 2007, down from 60 percent in 2006. Milliman believes this shift, corresponding to almost \$60 billion, is the result of companies seeking the lesser volatility of fixed income investments. The firm also publishes the quarterly magazine *Insight*, which addresses topics within the firm's practice areas.

In October 2007, the firm announced a partnership with Microsoft to enhance its MG-ALFA computer application. This application is designed to give a highly scalable and cost-effective cluster computing solution to life insurance and financial services clients.

GETTING HIRED

Without precedent (kind of)

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to getting a job at Milliman. The firm's autonomous setup means that "the hiring process will differ by office and by position." Even timing and need aren't necessarily factors that come into consideration—while the firm does recruit from college campuses as part of a regular intake, "when we hear of a good candidate and it's a good fit, we typically try to hire him/her regardless of need," an Atlanta-based consultant explains. "Good people are hard to find, and once we get them in, keeping them billable is not a problem."

Although the procedures may vary from office to office, a typical hire in Seattle goes through "phone interviews followed by one or two in-person visits with multiple meetings during the visits." In Dallas, meanwhile, "I know that phone interviews, in-person interviews with managers and peers, technical skills tests and personality tests have all been utilized."

Individual offices generally recruit from a handful of colleges in their backyards. In Chicago, for example, the firm trawls institutions such as the Universities of Illinois at Urbana and Champaign. After that, "we bring the best three to five students up to our office where they are interviewed by everyone in my group of 10. We make an offer to the best student from the group." It's a similar story in Boston, where the firm recruits from "mostly local schools, but we are open to resumes from around the country." In that office "we hire mostly entry-level analysts. We interview about five to six candidates each year and hire one or two. The questions asked are both job-specific and general. We want to get to know the person as much as possible."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Soft and gentle

Milliman insiders reckon the firm is "focused on problem-solving," and note that it is "client focused, yet driven very much by an entrepreneurial mindset." Its autonomous approach, meanwhile, means that it is "local, not global," in its dealings with clients, and in its culture. A consultant in Dallas, for example, thinks "the Southern region has a Southwest Airlines culture," which probably means it's relaxed and informal, rather than having anything to do with the availability of free pretzels.

Despite its regionality, there are things Milliman consultants have in common across the nation. They tend to be "math-oriented and less team-oriented," and a New York-based source thinks they're "gentler and easier to work with than the stereotypical overbearing and arrogant consultant." Not only that, but "the people who work here are take-charge, self-starting individuals who enjoy taking on a challenge. We are respectful of one another, and work as a team to ensure that our clients are 110 percent satisfied." All of that adds up to a "results-driven meritocracy," which promotes creativity and offers flexibility.

Flexible until the stress sets in

Much of the "flexibility" enjoyed by Milliman consultants is in their ability to work from home. Says an insider in Hartford, "All of the employees in my office have laptops and are free to work from home a couple days a week. Many consultants coach their kids' teams after work and have hobbies. Few are in the office after 5 p.m." The average workweek for a Millimanite, by the way, seems to be around 50 hours, although "when things get busy, they seem to get really busy," a respondent states.

Apparently, the flexibility comes down to the firm's willingness to trust its employees. Or, as one Atlanta-based consultant puts it, "Milliman promotes an open and adult setting where individuals are given the responsibility to manage their clients and their

work according to client expectations. This includes being flexible in my schedule to accommodate my responsibilities at home.” A colleague further explains that “when and where the work is done is secondary to getting it done, done right and done on time. Balancing work schedule and location and home life is completely flexible within these goals.”

So good does the firm’s policy appear to be, in fact, that even those who claim they cannot achieve balance lay the blame at their own feet, not Milliman’s. “Everyone balances work and life—some people better than others,” says an insider in Atlanta, claiming, “My lack of balance is because of who I am, not a result of where I work. Consultants here have an opportunity to choose their own balance, with corresponding rewards.” Career progression is, of course, one of those corresponding rewards and, according to a respondent, to achieve that quickly “requires more than a 40-hour week. However, if a slower pace of promotion is ok, fewer hours can be worked to have a balance.”

Don’t count on the airmiles

Milliman’s office setup means its consultants travel less than they might at other firms. As an example, a Denver-based insider says that, “depending on the job description, very little to no travel can be required, or the job might require travel two to four times a month.” A colleague in Minneapolis backs this up, saying, “My clients are local. This allows me to make day trips to see clients and be back home to see my family for dinner.” “My travel schedule is up to me to determine,” declares a colleague in the same office.

Emphasizing the lightness of the travel load, a consultant on the West Coast points out that “most people don’t travel every week. My travel is usually one to two trips per month for one or two days each.” Another staffer says, “There was one month that I was on the road more than in the office, but I volunteered for that project.” That underscores the firm’s commitment to keeping both its clients and its consultants happy—“we try to do most of our work in-house,” says an insider in Atlanta, “but travel as the clients need us to.”

A fair deal

Milliman consultants seem pretty happy with their pay packet as well, with base salaries pitched around the going market rate. As far as extras go, “We have most of the normal benefits. Nothing unusual.” The firm does have some decent extras to keep employees motivated, however, including a profit-sharing plan with a 401(k) match equaling about 13 percent of base compensation. To clarify, that breaks down as 10 percent profit sharing and matching of up to 3 percent of compensation, so employees have good reason to stay interested (beyond mere job satisfaction, that is). In addition, the firm is privately held, and consultants can become owners, if desired. There is also a stipend of \$3,000 for adopting parents.

Boot camp

“Training is generally on the job,” according to a respondent, and “most is unofficial.” And there’s nothing regional about that approach—it’s nationwide. Although employees may get pitched in at the deep end, “there is plenty of room to grow professionally into areas of interest” according to a New York-based staffer. That opinion is backed up by a cohort in Dallas, who says “it is sort of the sink or swim, figure it out in your own environment (not to say that people will not help if you ask, but they will not typically offer).” Another insider believes the lack of formal training can actually be beneficial: “While not ideal, it does identify those who are self-starters and willing to put in the time to learn for themselves, as well as ask the right questions.”

That’s not to say that the firm provides nothing in the way of formal mentoring or tutoring. Apart from the “unofficial, one-on-one training,” there is also a limited number of “seminars, meetings and web casts offered for various subjects.” Additionally, the company conducts an “annual consultant conference and financial support and incentives for ongoing training,” a source notes.

Climbing the ladder on merit

Comments on diversity are few and far between from Milliman consultants, but they do throw out a few observations. An insider in Atlanta notes that “few minorities work for Milliman, particularly at the higher levels of the company,” a statement that is neither supported nor refuted by any colleagues. More opinion exists on the male/female divide, however, with a male employee opining that “Milliman probably has one of the higher percentages of women in the consulting world, and appears to me completely supportive of hiring, promoting and mentoring women.” That opinion is corroborated by females in both Boston and New York, with the former stating her belief that, “with the flexible schedules that are offered, women have the same job opportunities as men.” The New Yorker, meanwhile, points out that although “there aren’t lots of senior women in the business, the opportunity to advance is gender blind. It’s all about talent and skill.”

The North Highland Company

550 Pharr Road
Suite 850
Atlanta, GA 30305
Phone: (404) 233-1015
Fax: (404) 233-4930
www.northhighland.com

LOCATIONS

Atlanta, GA (HQ)

Charlotte, NC • Dallas, TX • Denver, CO • Houston, TX •
Los Angeles, CA • Nashville, TN • New York, NY • Orlando,
FL • Philadelphia, PA • Richmond, VA • Sacramento, CA •
San Antonio, TX • Tallahassee, FL • Tampa, FL • Trenton,
NJ • Washington, DC

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Intelligence
Business & Operational Strategy
Customer Interactions
Financial Management
Human Capital
Process Management
Supply Chain Management
Technology Management
Technology Solutions

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman: Dave Peterson
President & CEO: Dan Reardon
2008 Employees: 585
2007 Employees: 500 +



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Local consultants—the way forward"
- "Body shop/staff augmentation mentality"
- "Lifestyle firm"
- "Limited"

UPPER

- No travel

DOWNER

- Fierce competition for advancement

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.northhighland.com/working_here

THE SCOOP

The consulting firm next door

The North Highland Company is an Atlanta-based management and technology consulting outfit. Through 17 U.S. offices and a hand-picked network of international partnerships, the firm offers supply chain management, strategy definition, business intelligence, human capital, IT management, process management, customer interaction solutions and other services. A founding principle of the company is its commitment to conducting business locally—consultants live and work in the same community as the client. Chairman Dave Peterson set the business model in motion when he started the company in 1992, having worked for a major consulting firm through the 1980s and witnessed the serious drawbacks of traveling to the client site. He believed a local focus would not only maximize productivity and performance, but also forge bonds with clients, ensuring successful long-term relationships.

High-minded tenets

Local consulting is not the only strong ideology of the firm. It places great value on experience, hiring only proven experts with some mileage already behind them in their careers; staff members average 15 years of service each. Additionally, it is an employee-owned firm, and an employee stock ownership plan results in everyone having a stake.

North Highland has a policy of maintaining vendor neutrality regarding the technology it uses and provides in servicing clients. This adds an element of flexibility to its practice areas. Without being tied to a specific vendor, the firm is at liberty to choose the most effective and economical technological route for each project.

Staying ahead of the game

North Highland's business intelligence practice keeps clients up to date on their competitors, while also putting their own strengths and weaknesses under the microscope. The firm's data warehousing systems collect, cleanse, organize and apply valuable data about prospects and customer behaviors, providing readily available insight into what drives the market and who stands to benefit the most from changes or developments. Moreover, its enterprise data management platforms provide decision support, querying and reporting, statistical analysis, forecasting and data mining, which allow an organization to respond to new information with the best possible outcome.

The write stuff

The research and analytics that lead to effective business intelligence also result in white papers and articles by North Highland consultants. Some recent examples include "Improving Service Quality While Cutting Cost in Government Agencies," a look at the means of streamlining work in the public sector; "Incorporating RFID Initiatives into a Future Business Strategy," a tech piece investigating the commercial possibilities of radio frequency identification, which can be used to tag inventory; and "Offshore Outsourcing Strategic Options," an examination of the risk and performance expectations involved in internationally outsourcing IT processes.

Rising star

Consulting magazine named North Highland No. 4 to its 2007 list of the Best Firms to Work For, marking the first time the firm had been chosen for the honor, for which it went up against 190 of the top consulting firms. The publication pointed out that North Highland had the best retention rate of all firms under consideration—less than 5 percent of the firm's staff is lost to voluntary turnover. In 2007 and 2008, the company was recognized in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Washington, D.C., as one of the best employers in those markets.

GETTING HIRED

Taking ownership

To attract new staffers, North Highland offers up the following mantra: “Own your life. Own your career. Own your company.” And to back it up, the firm cites the various policies it has in place with respect to work/life balance, career growth and shareholder opportunities. When it comes to balance, staffers have options for “local-only assignments,” the “right to say no” to projects and “generous paid time off, including three to four weeks of vacation annually.” Promotions occur “at the employee’s pace,” with “no up-or-our policy” and “no time and tenure requirement.” Additionally, a “stock ownership plan” gives staffers the sense that “we’re all in it together,” the firm insists. For convenient reference, North Highland has packaged its selling points into a recruiting brochure available for download on its careers site at www.northhighland.com/working_here.

The big sell

Of course, there’s selling to be done on both sides: Potential applicants should be aware that, in addition to experience and expertise, the firm wants consultants with an entrepreneurial bent, a “collegial” personality and a passion for “doing the right thing for a client.”

Open positions are searchable on North Highland’s web site by location and function. It’s easy enough to get a good sense of what each job entails, since most listings are highly detailed. Interested candidates are asked to apply by submitting contact information, a cover letter and a resume through an online form.

Novantas LLC

485 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017
Phone: (212) 953-4444
Fax: (212) 972-4602
www.novantas.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)
Chicago, IL
Burlington, Ontario
Madrid

PRACTICE AREAS

Brokerage & Wealth Management
Campaign Optimization
Distribution Management
Information Services
Insurance
Payments
Performance Measurement
Pricing
Retail & Commercial Banking

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Managing Partners: David G. Kaytes & Richard W. Spitler
2008 Employees: 125
2007 Employees: 120
2008 Revenue: \$37 million
2007 Revenue: \$35 million

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#3 – Relationships with Supervisors
#4 – Offices
#5 – Interaction with Clients
#7 – Overall Satisfaction
#10 – Best Firms to Work For
#10 – Compensation
#13 (Tie) – Firm Culture
#16 – Travel Requirements
#18 – Work/Life Balance

Diversity

#19 – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- “The opportunities and responsibilities given to associates”
- Small and nonhierarchical project teams
- “The nature of the projects encourages strategic thinking”
- “Absence of bureaucracy”

DOWNERS

- Limited scope of practice areas
- “Chaotic staffing”
- Directors “are not very involved in employee development or firm culture”
- “If you like the anonymity of a corporation, don’t work for us!”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.novantas.com/careers_who.shtml

THE SCOOP

E pluribus unum

Still a relatively young company, the idea for Novantas was seeded in the mid-1990s. A few consultants and practice leaders from Booz Allen Hamilton, Bain and First Manhattan Consulting Group met to discuss the limitations of the consulting industry. They felt clients were growing weary of traditional consulting, which relied on an inefficient, if not totally ineffectual, model that billed hours for large teams that, often unfamiliar with a client's business, spent time researching and analyzing data that would never prove useful. Compounding the difficulties, some clients were poaching the more experienced consultants for their own staff, thus equipping themselves to conduct research and consulting work internally, and at a lower cost. With these issues foremost in their minds, the founders created a firm that could offer a low staff-to-partner ratio on project teams (thus ensuring experienced hands guiding the work) and a high degree of specialization (rather than being a catch-all firm with diluted expertise). And when it came to engagements, the founders vowed to aim for tangible changes to a client's business, not merely paperwork and studies.

Bank bonded

One of the Novantas' primary objectives—a high degree of specialization—has been realized in the field of financial services. Most practice teams are focused on different sectors in the industry, such as retail banking, corporate banking, cards, payments, brokerage, wealth management and insurance, although the firm serves other industries when appropriate. Novantas, which has served 20 of the top-30 banks in the U.S. and four of the top-10 banks in the world, counts among its clients Citibank, Merrill Lynch, Barclays Bank PLC, AXA Financial, Microsoft and United Airlines. Work is primarily done for institutions in North America and Western Europe, with opportunities appearing occasionally in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

The adherence to another founding principle, maintaining a low staff-to-partner ratio on projects, is obvious in the structure of engagement teams. Typically, three to six consultants join with one or two managing directors, ensuring that the veterans bring their experience to bear on the content of the work, and aren't merely the face of the company, drafting contracts that they'll personally spend little time on.

The proper tools

Novantas' consulting services are designed around what it calls customer science. Customer science examines the total cosmos of revenue-generating capabilities: branding, market mix management, segmentation, product design, pricing, distribution management, sales execution and customer experience. Incidentally, it is the analytical rigor of this approach that has led to interest from clients outside of financial services, such as the travel and entertainment industries.

At the heart of these analytical methods are the firm's proprietary tools: MindSwift, the Apex database suite, PriceTek and CSSI, to name a few. MindSwift, deployed as an application service provider, or ASP, systematically reviews a company's interactions with a customer, gauging the value and impact of the interactions and then designing possible improvements in technique, both conversational and online. These techniques can be instituted in existing customer relationship management applications or implemented through MindSwift on the client's desktop. Products in the Apex database suite are designed to help retail and business banks market and sell more effectively by tracking local performance metrics. PriceTek is another ASP service that analyzes how current and prospective customers respond to changes in a bank's interest rates, relative to the competition. Based on these measurements, PriceTek creates predictive models of how balance acquisition, growth, diminishment and attrition will be affected by future pricing changes. Finally, CSSI, though it sounds like another spinoff of the popular forensic investigation drama, is an integrated program that incorporates sales and service assessments, training, management and coaching with the aim of improving sales strategy and tactics.

Comparing apples to apples

Novantas classifies tools like MindSwift and PriceTek as information services—meaning they help clients learn more about themselves and their customers. In business, however, some of the most valuable information lies in comparing activities and performance with the competition. For this sort of competitive context, the firm offers the services of Qvalytix, its performance measurement division that provides an extensive suite of peer-based ratings biannually. The Qvalytix ratings service compiles a variety of anonymous customer information drawn from study participants, producing dashboard reports that allow consistent and uniform comparisons of peer organizations. Through this information, clients are able to precisely identify their relative strengths and weaknesses. Use of the service is widespread: Qvalytix ratings for retail banking are currently used by 30 of the top-50 U.S. retail banks, while the small business ratings are used by 25 of the top-40 small business banking organizations.

Jackson action

In the interest of expansion, Novantas will sometimes acquire smaller companies with market penetration or capabilities the firm finds complementary to its own service lines. Most recently, in March 2007, it purchased the Jackson LaSalle Group, a Chicago-based financial services consultancy. Novantas management felt Jackson's services lined up well with its existing offerings, while also providing an entryway into the Midwest.

Expansion can also occur by way of offering new services. In January 2008, the firm announced the creation of Novarica, a subsidiary primed to offer retained advisory services, published research and project-based consulting to the financial services and insurance industries. Concurrent with its debut, Novarica released two research reports, "Key Metrics for Insurer CIOs" and "Insurance Software Activity 2005-2007: Distribution, Policy Administration and Workflow," and an executive brief, "Best Practices in Insurance Software Vendor Selection." Forthcoming research will focus on life insurance distribution in China and India and the business value of service oriented architecture.

Further review

Novantas consultants, themselves, are no strangers to the publishing world, frequently reflecting on the current state of business in articles and reports. Professionals from the firm have been published in financial journals like *Banking Strategies*, *American Banker*, *Commercial Lending Review* and, for readers in España, *La Revista de Finanzas* and *Nueva Empresa*. A January 2008 issue of *Commercial Lending Review*, for example, featured a piece, written collectively by Novantas consultants, on the effective repurposing of marketing tactics from other industries for use in banking.

Novantas professionals also are frequent guest speakers, year-round and world-round, at major banking and financial services conferences. In November 2007, at BAI's Retail Delivery Conference & Expo, Managing Director Sherief Meleis gave a presentation on improving branch network performance through local market knowledge and responsiveness. Michael Rice, also a managing director, presented on customer prospecting and acquisition at SourceMedia's 12th Annual Small Business Banking Conference in October 2007.

GETTING HIRED

Heavy on brainteasers

Insiders say Novantas "predominately targets graduating seniors for hire, though there are also some industry hires." Recruiting takes place "primarily at Ivy League" schools, but a managing director notes, "We are expanding our school base over the coming years." Campus hires generally have an "on-campus interview round with two lower-level associates," followed by an "office interview with two directors." A recent hire shares, "We ask case questions, market-sizing and problem-solving/quantitative questions," and a colleague agrees, "We tend to stress quantitative skills and problem-solving abilities with brainteasers and case questions." In fact, adds another, "We tend to skew heavily toward brainteasers in early rounds." Some questions may be along the lines of, "Should company X acquire company Y as part of its growth strategy?" or "Given a particular situation, how can

company Z improve its profitability?” One associate mentions that “interviewees also complete a writing sample during the final round.”

The interview process for experienced hires “is straightforward,” insiders say, and involves “several rounds of screening interviews,” followed by a “day of multiple partner interviews.” “Often,” a principal explains, “we try to interact socially with potential midcareer hires, as well.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Fun with friends

“It is great to work at a place where your colleagues are also your friends,” says a lead associate. Others agree that “people naturally want to hang out with each other, which makes coming to the office a little bit fun.” “One of the greatest joys and challenges of working at Novantas is the fact that you are largely working with friends, not co-workers,” another concurs. Insiders use words like “collegial,” “supportive,” “warm,” “passionate” and “caring” to describe their peers, and say the firm “has a very collegial atmosphere among all levels of staff, from top to bottom.” “Novantas hires laid-back, fun, jocular employees, and the culture reflects it,” reports a New York-based staffer. And although we’re told the firm “went through some growing pains” while expanding “from a startup to a midsize consulting firm,” it has still “managed to maintain a small-firm culture.” “Everyone, from associates up to directors, is on a first-name basis,” adds a recent hire.

Small but effective

In addition, insiders say Novantas fosters an environment that is “challenging, hardworking,” “results-oriented, pragmatic,” “extremely analytical” and “entrepreneurial.” “The caliber of intellect and character at the firm is unrivaled, making Novantas a truly unique place to work,” raves a senior associate. And the fact that the firm is “growing rapidly” keeps “everyone excited and on their toes.” In a nutshell, remarks a happy staffer, “We enjoy the friendly and familiar atmosphere of a small workforce, while maintaining a reputation among our clients for expertise that easily rivals that of any larger consulting firm.”

A low ratio wins fans

Although everyone gets along, some say staffers tend to keep to their own peer groups. Associates “are very approachable and are often willing to build relationships both at work and outside the work environment.” But while a “majority of the managers/directors are approachable and friendly,” that’s usually the case “on a business level only.” One source finds that “managing directors have rarely sought junior or midlevel input in making internal firm decisions that directly impact staff.” He adds that this issue has “caused some alienation and consequent departures.”

But others say that, as far as they are concerned, “senior management seems to really care about the well-being of the staff ... both for personal growth and for the prosperity of the firm.” And whether or not everyone drinks beers together after work, respondents at all levels claim to work well together. “One of the main reasons why I decided to join Novantas was its low staff-to-partner ratio,” shares a manager, adding, “We have approximately two-and-a-half staff to one partner, giving the consulting staff a terrific opportunity to work closely with our senior leaders on most projects.” A senior associate echoes, “All levels of the firm interact directly with each other on a daily basis—our project teams are very small and do not have complicated reporting structures.”

Jump in from the start

Plus, the small team size means that even junior staffers “tend to have more exposure to our clients and their top management.” In general, we’re told the firm “makes an effort to give new associates as much face time with clients as possible.” An associate reports, “I’ve been running many of the meetings I’ve been a part of, since I was the one who did most of the work on the

presentation.” And another newbie enthusiastically agrees that she has had “unbelievable exposure to top-level firm and client management since day one!”

Training comes with time

Given all the emphasis on getting in on the action early, it's no wonder insiders say that “most training is done on the job and on the fly.” There is, however, some “formal training for all new people in skills, tools and consulting techniques.” In particular, there's a “one-week initial training program,” followed by “additional modules throughout your first three years.”

Some say these formal sessions “are interesting and informative,” but one respondent complains, “Especially given the fact that we, as a firm, tend to specialize in one practice area, it would be nice if we had some more understanding of the topic and the techniques with which to tackle it, instead of being dictated to, line by line, during the actual project. This would ease the strain on managers and help facilitate the development of the associates, both technically and strategically.” Still, as a senior associate says, “The mentoring and training system is becoming more formalized as the firm grows.” We're also told that “most of the training for managers is on-the-job training,” though a manager reports that “an official training program for managers will be implemented this year.”

Make partner by 30, or take things slow

When it comes to climbing the ladder at Novantas, a managing director says that with the “fairly rapid advancement, the target is to make partner at 30.” There are “biannual performance reviews,” and consultants “officially advance in title after approximately one year, with a significant promotion usually happening two to three years in.” Still there's no mad scramble for those who aren't ready to jump ahead. A recent hire states, “It's the kind of place I'd be comfortable being at in three to four years,” adding, “I'm in no rush to go to business school, so it's good to know that my firm isn't rushing me either.” And a managing director explains, “We have no up-or-out policy. We realize that at a young age, staff are contemplating a variety of career choices and we try to assist them, whether it be to continue with us, go to grad school or move to a line job. We're very flexible because we're relatively small and the partners are able to make individual decisions and not have hard and fast rules.” That being said, a lead associate remarks, “While the firm is not up or out, management does counsel out those professionals whom they feel do not fit well with the job or whom they feel are underperforming.”

Time flies when you're having fun

Those who stick it out at Novantas find that their work hours can “fluctuate significantly” from 50 to 80 per week. A newbie warns, “Work hours are heavily dependent on how your manager works. If [the manager] chooses to work 20 hours a day, you may have to work 16 to try to keep up!” Or, as a co-worker puts it, “Work takes as long as it needs to, based on what you're trying to learn and accomplish.” But, he adds, “The nice thing is that you don't need to be stuck in the office doing work all the time. It's very easy to go home at 5 p.m. and work in front of the TV, or go out to a long dinner and come back to work. Just as long as it gets done.”

Plus, notes a managing director, “Most of us have a hard time remembering how many hours we work,” adding happily, “It's like pursuing anything you enjoy intensely—the time doesn't seem to register.” Or, as an associate remarks, “The key to the work/life balance at Novantas is to make work your life.” She adds, “This is to say that, here at Novantas, we have found a way to make time at work enjoyable and social.”

Sporadic staffing

Consultants who are looking for more of a personal life outside of the office say that, as a result of the variable hours, “work/life balance varies significantly,” and “some months are better than others.” A source explains, “The issue comes when the firm has too much work and people are spread too thin—then the balance will shift more to work. But many directors are aware of this and do their best to make sure their associates aren't overloaded, though sometimes there isn't much you can do.” A senior associate, expressing a bit more frustration, notes, “Because of the firm's small size and the varying demand in the market for

consulting services, it's hard to know how many people to hire in a given year. Currently, we are understaffed and overworked. Three months from now, we may be overstaffed and underworked. Furthermore, work is expected to take priority over everything else in your life. This is fairly standard in the consulting world, and Novantas is no exception."

Higher-ups have an easier time achieving balance, as "tenure brings about more efficiency," but it still "requires hardcore planning." A principal insists he is "able to make work meet my schedule by planning in advance and communicating priorities." "Good project planning, communication between team members and support from the firm's leadership makes it possible," agrees a colleague. And, a director insists, "family time is important, and Novantas supports me 100 percent."

Travel every two weeks

Balance is improved by the fact that, by and large, "travel is minimal" at Novantas, and only pops up "every two weeks for a day or so." A senior associate explains, "Most of the work is data-driven, which can be done off site. Most of the status updates and meetings are done via phone/Web." A colleague agrees, "Typically, the bulk of the work is done in our offices, and we only travel to the client site for work sessions or for sharing the results or recommendations."

However, we're told the firm also has "longer-running international projects as well, for those that are actively seeking travel opportunities." In those situations, "the locations are usually large cities or desirable locations," and may be overseas in places like "the U.K., Eastern Europe, Spain and Dubai." Some respondents say management will "take into consideration your desire to travel when staffing," but one newbie who reports traveling for weeks at a time complains, "Some people are dying to travel but are stuck in the office, while others get sent away for months at a time." But at least when travel does come up, we're told the "firm culture is not penny-pinching at all," which means there's "no questioning of travel expenses."

Super salaries

The firm doesn't cut corners with salaries, either. Insiders say "Novantas has great compensation compared to other consulting firms." A principal with nearly eight years at the firm raves about the "aggressive increases in salary year over year." Senior staffers also benefit from "tenure-based bonuses," and partners say "earnings in excess of any planned capital investments are distributed" to them. Higher-ups also receive "401(k) matching" that is "up to 6 percent of base salary, plus a percentage of revenue on sold deals."

More junior staffers can look forward to an extra "graduation bonus," part of a "new career development program" that comes into effect "if you stay with the firm for three years." The bonus is "commensurate with their last bonus payout." Still, one younger staffer moans, "compared to other industries that require similar skill sets and hours, Novantas falls below the average."

Take a breather on the terrace

In other perks, there is "no employee co-pay for health insurance premiums," and the firm "pays for cell phone and home Internet service." There are also frequent "social activities," including "cocktail parties, very nice happy hours, wine tastings and summer white water rafting trips," as well as a "fun holiday party with excellent, humorous presentations by the first-year analysts." In addition, adds a New York-based lead associate, "We have a firm volleyball team and the firm sponsors participation in a citywide league."

Consultants are also pleased that "both U.S. offices are new and well organized," with "free soda in the fridge" and a "really good coffee machine." New Yorkers, in particular, rave, "Our offices have the best roof terrace in Midtown!"

Going green

Another advantage of the office: It's going green. An associate tells us Novantas "recently enacted a green policy with a focus on recycling and the elimination of Styrofoam in the office." A colleague adds that the firm also sponsors semiannual

participation “in New York Cares, a citywide community service program that improves the conditions of schools and public parks in New York’s five boroughs.”

“Reasonably diverse”

Insiders say that Novantas, while only “reasonably diverse, is a very open place to work,” with a “strong culture of tolerance and support of life preference decisions.” “Throughout our recruiting process,” says a manager, “we are mindful of attracting, hiring and retaining talented minorities in the firm.” We’re also told “there are openly gay members of staff in the senior ranks and in the junior levels,” and an insider states, “GLBT professionals feel comfortable introducing their partners or significant others to the firm, and bring them to firm gatherings and social events.”

In addition, an associate insists, “Novantas has made a significant effort to hire and develop more women.” A co-worker agrees: “We make a very conscious effort to recruit women at the firm”; nonetheless, she adds, “we are very lacking in female presence above the associate level.” Another echoes, “Women consistently form about half of the incoming associate classes, but for various reasons, they are increasingly scarce the higher up you move in the firm hierarchy.” Still, a female associate explains, “The women gather quarterly for a ‘ladies’ dinner,’ and I have yet to feel that I am not considered capable based on my sex.” Another comments that although she finds “there is little female-specific mentorship,” she is pleased that “there is some effort to give women face time” with the firm’s two female managing directors.

OC&C Strategy Consultants

33 Arch Street, 22nd Floor
Boston, MA 02110
Phone: (617) 896-9900
www.occstrategy.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA • New York, NY • San Francisco, CA • Abu Dhabi • Brussels • Dubai • Düsseldorf • Hamburg • Hong Kong • London • Mumbai • New Delhi • Paris • Rotterdam • Shanghai

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Unit Strategy
Group Strategy
M&A & Transaction Support
Organization & Change
Product/Market/Channel Strategy
Strategy Realization

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Worldwide Managing Partner: Michael Jary
2008 Employees: 450
2007 Employees: 350+

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #12 – Offices
- #17 – Compensation
- #17 – Formal Training
- #19 – Travel Requirements
- #20 – Overall Satisfaction

Diversity

- #20 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- “International exposure”
- Partners are accessible

DOWNERS

- “Infrastructure needs to improve”
- “Very little associate training or development”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.occstrategy.com/recruiting

THE SCOOP

The name is no lie

As its title implies, OC&C Strategy Consultants focuses on strategic analysis, breaking that concept down into three components: corporate strategy, business or market strategy, and strategy realization. The firm tries to pace itself during consulting contracts, finding the possible solutions to a problem before jumping into operational issues.

Although OC&C has stopped publicizing its client list, it does say that it works not only with major corporations, but also welcomes contracts from smaller companies that need strategic help in rapidly changing industries. The firm aims to work with “ambitious organizations that understand the importance of excellent strategy.” Its industries include business services, consumer goods, financial services, industry and infrastructure, media, private equity, retail and distribution, technology, telecommunications, and travel, transport and logistics.

Buying stuff and talking about it

One area in which the firm takes particular pride is its expertise in consumer goods. Within this area, it tries to provide solutions in three key sections: growth stakes, profitability issues and category management. In connection with consumer goods, retail and distribution have also long been an OC&C focus. The firm claims to have been one of the original advocates for the importance of emerging value offers, private label goods and battling category killers. In addition, the firm has recently made heavy investigations into retail brand development, strategic implementation and internalization strategies.

Since its founding, OC&C has made a significant effort to advise media outlets, recently concerning subjects such as the use of free newspaper copies to boost circulation and the decline of magazine readership in the face of Internet competition. Among the media-related services it offers are strategy reviews, advice to governments on broadband policy, transformational performance improvement, profitable use of the digital arena, and go-to-market strategies for new services and products.

Keeping tabs

In March 2008, OC&C publicized what it calls a unique methodology for measuring the development of new consumer goods. Instead of focusing on short-term gains or volume, the methodology seeks to track whether companies are successful with their new products over a two-year period, measuring areas such as continued availability and organic growth. Many media outlets have addressed OC&C’s annual Christmas Trading Index in 2008, which listed the best and worst performers over the holiday season. The firm has also published the Global Giants Index every May since 2002, which tracks and compares the performance of the world’s largest consumer goods companies.

Strategies to make the world better

The firm enjoys highlighting its charity work, and officially lists “pro bono” as one of its areas of expertise, saying that it is “committed to applying [its] skills for social gain.” In partnership with the venture philanthropy group Impetus Trust, the firm has given strategy advice to charities such as St. Giles Trust, which aids both current and former criminal prisoners, and Leap, which helps youth resolve conflicts peacefully, so that they don’t end up needing help from St. Giles Trust. The firm also advised the largest charity merger ever in the U.K., when the Cancer Research Campaign joined forces with the Imperial Cancer Research Fund to become Cancer Research U.K.

Still Eurocentric, but trying

Chris Outram founded OC&C in London in 1987, as part of a team that included the current head of the firm, Worldwide Managing Partner Michael Jary. After several years at other consulting firms, including BCG and Booz Allen Hamilton, Outram

and a colleague had tired of the way their employers devoted so much time to operational issues while neglecting strategic analysis. They decided that it would be “more fun and more challenging” to start their own firm.

OC&C was founded in Europe and still concentrates most of its services there, but it’s also been trying to create a stronger presence in the United States. To gain greater access to the American market, the firm merged with Boston-based Callidon Group in June 2007. Callidon was especially prized for its contacts and skills in media and publishing. Another recent area of expansion has been the Middle East. In early 2007, the firm acquired Middle East Strategy Advisors (MESA), which has a broad network in the region for advising on strategy consulting, investments and change management.

Living in the OC (&C)

The firm has received a variety of recognitions for its lifestyle. In May 2006, the Rotterdam office made the *Financial Times* list of Europe’s 100 Best Workplaces for the second straight year, and in May 2007, the Düsseldorf office made the same list. OC&C offices have been involved in some unorthodox, but undeniably fun, activities, like the well-publicized October 2007 firm get-together in Barcelona, where staffers set three world records—shortest time to break 1,000 balloons, largest multi-leg race and most people to stand up with their arms linked.

GETTING HIRED

Thinkers wanted

OC&C is highly selective in its hiring. One insider calls it “really, really exclusive,” and says the firm “looks for engineers or candidates with a science background, particularly.” Another source describes the process as consisting of “two rounds of interviews. The first round tests the standard consulting aptitude, while the second round tests personality fit.” A consultant notes, “Obviously case interview questions are heavily employed to measure quantitative skills, though we also place high importance on fitting the OC&C culture.”

As far as the schools marked for recruitment, a source says, “for the Boston office, we primarily recruit MBAs from MIT, Tuck, HBS and occasionally other schools, such as Yale. For associates (undergrad) we recruit mainly from Williams, MIT, Harvard and Dartmouth.” For those applying, a manager advises, “we are looking for fresh thinkers, not for the application of prefabricated frameworks.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Small, but not stuffy

People at OC&C tend to get along. One insider describes his co-workers as “social, friendly, industrious and intellectually curious ... a great group of people across all offices worldwide.” A manager relates that the firm is “open to employees having fun at work,” while a consultant says “it is a very open culture, where people do not take themselves very seriously and partners are extremely approachable and friendly.” A source in San Francisco echoes those sentiments: “The U.S. offices of OC&C are still relatively small, so it’s got a very tight-knit, relaxed atmosphere.”

Having a small core of employees can lead to some difficulty in balancing work/life, however. According to one source, “When on a project, the balance typically shifts heavily to the work side. The type and duration of the project affect how much life you will get outside of work. Between projects, however, I have always had time to relax and catch up on the other half of the equation.” A consultant in San Francisco has a similar take, saying, “Ability to balance is directly related to the project and deadlines you have—it can vary. Overall, the firm does a good job of ensuring no one is getting hammered for an extended period of time.” But sometimes it just requires adjustment. One insider shares, “In the first years, it was quite tough to find the balance, but now it has become easy with lots of discipline.”

Go where you're needed

OC&C, having relatively few locations, often has to put its staff on the road. "Traveling is part of the job, but it is not excessive. While it is heavily dependent on the project, on the whole it'll be around 30 percent," says an associate consultant. A colleague reports that "travel has not been excessive, and the types of projects require travel to some pretty interesting places (London, Singapore, Latin America, etc.)." Luckily, says one insider, "people are generally accommodating of dates you need to be at home for." And since travel hinges on the client, "for different individuals, some go for months without leaving the office."

Rewards on the side

The firm offers some nice perks, especially in the form of excursions. Says a source in Boston, "Our office organizes a quarterly activity. This ranges from a Red Sox or a Celtics game to a weekend outing at a local vacation spot." Also, an insider reveals, "if you are on the road for a long time, the company allows you to fly your significant other to your location, instead of you going back and forth." A consultant adds that "four weeks of paid vacation is a huge plus."

Talking with the top brass

As would be expected in such a tight-knit organization, employees are able to interact with clients and management frequently. One insider finds "directors get involved with everyone on a team from day one. You also get opportunities to interact with clients and top-level management early on." A source in Boston agrees, saying, "Small case teams provide opportunities to build close relationships with upper-level management. Managers are involved in and truly care about professional development of younger team members." Attesting to the access junior staffers have to higher-ups, a source relates, "Before I was promoted to consultant, I was routinely meeting with our clients' CFO and CEO. There were many calls with the CFO where I was trusted by OC&C on my own."

Honing skills

OC&C also ensures that hires are given proper training. As a source in San Francisco explains, "Most training is official, and most of the courses are tailored to the entry-level associate and the senior-level consultant. In the last few years, the company has added a number of post-MBA trainings for people without consulting experience; this has been very positive. There are few courses available at the engagement manager and more senior levels." The process can be doubly rewarding, too. One insider describes the "one-week companywide training week in a different destination each year (last year, it was Barcelona and this year will be Budapest)." In the insider's view, "This is truly a perk of working for OC&C—an all-expenses-paid, weeklong trip to a fabulous destination!"

In search of women

Small populations can lead to skewed statistics. As one source sees it, "The firm is very receptive for women, though their number needs to be bumped up." In Boston, there are "six female consultants and 25 male consultants." A consultant in San Francisco finds the office in a similar state, explaining, "The managing director is a woman, and we would like to have more women. However, the number of women in the office is still too low."

You can start with soup

OC&C is not massively connected to the social sector, but there are some programs underway. As one source reports, they had the "first event this year—we worked at a soup kitchen." Attention is also given to developing countries: "We donate to charities and have been supporting education in Africa through the establishment of an Internet café that is required to offer Internet access for free to children." An insider recalls, "One of my managers worked for a school in Cambodia for six months as a pro bono project." Ultimately, says a senior associate, participation is "not mandatory, but there are some events we organize together."

Opera Solutions

17 State Street
New York, NY 10004
Phone: (646) 437-2100
Fax: (646) 437-2101
www.operasolutions.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)
Jersey City, NJ
San Diego, CA
London
New Delhi
Paris
Shanghai

PRACTICE AREAS

Accelerated Reengineering
Growth Analytics
Investment Governance
Loyalty Enhancement
Procurement Optimization
Outsourcing & Offshoring

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chief Operating Officer: Peter Cummings
2008 Employees: 275
2007 Employees: 240

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#20 – Compensation

Diversity

#7 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- “Being known on a first-name basis by our own CEO/CFO/COO”
- “The opportunity I have to shape my company”
- Extremely diverse staff
- “Getting the chance to make significant contributions to major projects as a business analyst”

DOWNERS

- “Lack of scale in some areas,” such as HR, IT services and training
- Little transparency in the review process
- “Chaos of a small firm”
- Limited charitable efforts

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.operasolutions.com/careers.html

THE SCOOP

Solutions a fat lady can sing about

Opera Solutions isn't messing around. The firm focuses on large and midsize businesses and private equity firms that want to boost profits quickly. Opera has several clients in the Fortune 100, from industries including automotive, retail, corporate and investment banking, credit cards, insurance, media and entertainment, medical services, publishing and telecommunications.

"Slow" is a four letter word

Considering how long some operas run, the firm's name doesn't really fit its style. The goal at Opera is to give clients significant and sustainable profit improvement within 12 months; although the firm wants its results to last, of course, its priority is making sure that those results happen as soon as possible. Opera claims to take a venture capitalist approach to profit growth. It leverages its international connections to achieve ambitious aims, calling itself a "specialist global advisory firm" with more than 900 projects worldwide.

The firm bases its approach on five core concepts: speed, data-intensive analytics, pragmatism, execution and a global approach. It believes that deep data analysis is required because data will provide the right solutions when the right questions are asked. Opera's pragmatism is based on finding options that can be turned into reality quickly, and execution refers to the firm's attempt to work directly with client teams. The global approach comes from enlisting the best people, wherever they may be on the planet.

Small fish need not apply

The firm looks for clients with the following characteristics: a large customer base requiring micro-level customer segmentation, transaction-intensive environments with a variety of customer contact areas, service delivery that is changing quickly, a global delivery footprint (either current or potential) that is actively adapting to beat competitors, a large purchased expense base with thousands of suppliers and several purchasing points, a technology-oriented spend base and an aggressive internal investment portfolio.

One example of Opera's work is a recent contract in which it was called on to improve the customer acquisition strategy of a Fortune 100 financial services firm. Opera's growth analytics department took a data-intensive approach to perform customer segmentation, behavioral modeling and impact realization. It then created a sensitivity-based pricing tool for acquiring customers, which it claims will have a potential impact of \$35 million.

Second time's the charm

Although Opera only started out in 2003, many of its consultants have worked together since 1992—its founders also started Mitchell Madison Group. Although some people view Opera as simply a retread of MMG, one of the problems at MMG was the extreme difference of opinion among executives about its direction, a problem Opera seems to have steered clear of.

The firm has been trying hard to practice what it preaches, with internal growth as rapid as the profit goals it offers clients. April 2007 saw the opening of an office in Jersey City (near New York City) to help accommodate a geyser-like rise in the number of employees from 70 to 250 in only 18 months. More recently, in May 2008, the firm opened an office in San Diego.

GETTING HIRED

Go in for the long haul

One associate reports that "a key differentiator" between Opera and "the bigger firms (McKinsey/Bain/BCG)," is that Opera is "looking for students who want to be a part of building our firm." A colleague notes, "We recruit out of a pretty stable pool of

schools and follow the standard on-campus approach,” which begins with a resume drop, followed by a series of interviews. Opera targets “Dartmouth, Cornell, Harvard, MIT and smaller liberal arts schools” at the undergraduate level within the U.S., as well as “top schools” in China and India. At the MBA level, the firm focuses domestically on Tuck (Dartmouth), Wharton (Penn), Columbia, MIT, Michigan and GSB (Chicago), and internationally on INSEAD in Paris and the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad and Calcutta, India.

In all, we’re told Opera follows a “typical consulting hiring process,” with a “combination of case and fit interviews.” Generally, qualified candidates go through two rounds of interviews, with two interviews (30 or 45 minutes each) in the first round with principals, managers and senior associates, followed by three interviews (45 minutes each) in the second round with principals or senior managers. One staffer notes that “at least two principals have to interview every candidate.”

Cases count, but so does personality

Tougher interview questions might include “brainteasers” or “short cases related to someone’s prior experience (from the resume).” “Everyone makes up their own cases with variants depending on the candidate,” explains a senior associate. A colleague adds, “In case of undergraduates, we ask market sizings, brainteasers, etc., to understand their thought process,” whereas “for the MBA candidates, we always ask business cases to test their ability to problem solve.” One recent hire recalls, “Three of my four interviews were case-based, and all had quantitative components.” He shares, “I remember in one of my case interviews I was asked to estimate how many tickets are sold in all major league baseball stadiums in the U.S. every year.”

But we’re also told that “personality plays a huge role in the firm’s decision.” An associate insists, “The biggest thing to keep in mind is that, as a small firm, fit is very important and factors into our decisions more than I would assume it does elsewhere.” Another staffer echoes that there is a “heavy emphasis on personality, spirit and fit with firm culture,” noting that “entrepreneurial streaks are embraced.”

When it comes to getting a response to an application, little nail-biting is required, since there’s a “very quick turnaround process—usually one week from the first interview to extending an offer (sometimes even faster),” a manager reports.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

A merry group that’s serious about growth

“There’s a level of friendliness and camaraderie at Opera that I did not expect when joining the corporate world,” remarks a business analyst. Colleagues agree that the “very friendly,” “incredibly collegial,” “young” and “energetic” culture are the “strongest attributes of Opera Solutions.” Others add that the firm’s atmosphere is “entrepreneurial, creative and growth-oriented,” with “a ‘we can’ spirit.” “Employees are encouraged and expected to participate in shaping and building the firm.” And Opera is growing quickly—as an associate who joined in 2005 notes, “When I started, there were barely 75 professionals,” adding that in the “last two-and-a-half years, that figure has quadrupled.”

All ideas welcome

A source notes that, “as a new firm, the culture is still evolving,” but explains that “new members of the firm each have the opportunity to propose new ideas and help create what they are a part of.” He adds, “for example, in our new office, we wanted a room where people could take 30 minutes a day to relax ... So now there is a game room with a pingpong table, billiards and a 54-inch flat-screen TV with an Xbox 360.” An engagement manager agrees, “Our corporate culture promotes individuals, no matter what title they have, to start and participate [in] what we call firm-building initiatives (e.g., soccer club, golf club, social activities, volunteering work, training, recruiting, etc.). We like that the company supports these types of initiatives.” Others add that there is “a lot of openness and flexibility since it is still a growing firm,” and that “if you demonstrate ability, they give you responsibility, regardless of your official level.”

Show and tell

Insiders also say Opera places an “extremely high emphasis on diversity,” and is characterized by a “multicultural” and “very international” staff. We’re told there are “native speakers of about 35 languages” and that “all minorities are represented.” “We have more than 30 countries represented among my 250 colleagues,” a respondent points out, noting, “We have people from every continent and every race.” “As a white American,” a colleague states, “I feel 100 percent confident in saying that I am the minority at my firm, and I think it is actually why I like working at Opera. Everyone is from such a different background that it is interesting to learn about their experiences.” “I would be shocked to find any firm, anywhere, that is more diverse than Opera,” an associate insists. Staffers can share their various passions and backgrounds in an Opera newspaper that comes out once a month, as well as during monthly Friday lunch meetings when staffers can present “on their country of origin and all the cultural facts that they care to share,” or teach others “about a hobby of their own, e.g., skydiving/triathlons.”

Everyone’s equal

Respondents also say that “a women’s initiative program has been established this past year,” and that the ratio of men to women is “getting close to 50/50.” “Everyone is treated equally—work hard, get rewarded, end of story,” insists one female source. A co-worker is slightly less enthusiastic, noting, “Of course we have more men than we do women, but look at the industry and look at the applicant pools. When all factors are taken into account, I think we are doing quite well.”

And while there is no explicit commitment at Opera regarding diversity with respect to GLBTs, a contact states, “We have colleagues that are gay and they perform and have access to the same opportunities as any employee.” Another remarks, “I haven’t heard any conversations or discussion about GLBT issues at Opera, but just from knowing my co-workers, I think most people here would be at least respectful and understanding of GLBT issues.”

The “sky is the limit”

Despite the firm’s varied composition and recent growth, a senior associate insists Opera “still [has] the small-firm feel in interpersonal behaviors.” “Supervisors are extremely open to upward feedback” and, “for the most part,” managers are “excellent,” “very driven,” “very willing to teach” and “very bright.”

That being said, a longtimer warns that there’s “no babysitting or hand-holding in this firm,” and staffers are encouraged to take on responsibility from the get-go. One source reports, “I’ve been interacting with clients since my first week at Opera, and now I’m already starting to manage the relationships myself.” Others agree they have “had a lot of exposure” to “clients’ senior management.” In fact, notes a recent hire, “Opera’s structure forces junior talent to interact with senior clients because the projects would likely not be completed otherwise.” As a result, insists a colleague, the “sky is the limit for junior consultants who demonstrate the ability to interact with senior clients.”

Support when you need it

There are some “formal and informal training” programs in place to ensure staffers get some support. Insiders say “all new hires go through a two-week formal training,” and “longer training events take place for specialized groups, such as analytics.” In addition, “one Friday per month is devoted to a ‘lunch-and-learn’ session, which usually includes high-level project overviews.” Others note that the firm is “currently developing some great official training courses” and that “lots of resources are being devoted toward this.” One associate insists “there is no training like on-the-job training, and as a still small and growing company, we get tons of it. I have learned by doing since day one at Opera.” At the same time, says a senior source, “The principals are very accessible and are very focused on mentoring junior consultants. Everyone, whatever his level, is expected to mentor junior people.” To that end, “every employee is assigned a mentor, who will provide career guidance.”

A true meritocracy—really!

Fortunately, everyone is allowed to develop at his or her own pace, since the firm's culture is "not up or out." Promotions "based strictly on personal performance, regardless of MBA or educational background," a policy one senior associate calls "the opposite of most consulting firms."

An engagement manager explains that if "you perform well, you get promoted very fast (some individuals have received two promotions only six months apart), while others work and grow at a slower pace and may take two or three years to get promoted." A colleague agrees, "Principals make sure that each consultant is positioned at the right level and that individual development needs are rapidly addressed." For example, a source explains, "one of my colleagues was promoted from business analyst (entry level after college) to associate, and six months later, to senior associate (usually people with an MBA). Others stay longer until they develop skills needed for the next position." What's clear is that "if you are good, you get promoted very quickly"; in fact, we're told that "some people have made it to partner without ever leaving for an MBA." An associate remarks, "As crazy as it sounds, it really is as fast as you demonstrate you can work at the next level." That being said, one newbie states that "as there have been hints of stemming the growth, I can't imagine this method of operation will last much longer."

For those who decide they do want to pursue an advanced degree, it certainly helps that the firm provides "some business school tuition help for high performers at certain target schools." Or, in the words of a recent hire, "If you have done well in your time at Opera, choose to go to one of the five or so MBA programs that we recruit from and promise to come back to Opera after you graduate, they will help you pay for school."

Good to be a senior

In other perks, Opera "frequently sponsors individual interests/clubs/hobbies, such as opera tickets, sporting events and corporate athletic teams (basketball, tennis, volleyball, soccer, etc.), and [also pays for] the cost of running races." Some "highlights" include a skybox at Madison Square Garden, and tickets to New York Rangers or Knicks games, professional bull-riding and a Stevie Wonder concert. A junior staffer notes, however, that tickets are only available "when they have not been claimed by more senior people in the firm." There are also "free big lunches on Fridays," and overall, "a lot of expenses are covered." Plus, staffers get to go on "official sponsored team trips" to places like Puerto Vallarta, Copenhagen and Las Vegas.

"Health care is fully paid by the company," although "the firm does not cover dependants' health insurance." A principal mentions receiving "firm equity," and an engagement manager says he was given a "moving expenses reimbursement." Some respondents say that "base salary is below average," but most note that "if you consider the annual bonus, total compensation is very competitive." One longtimer reports, "Top performers at all levels can receive in excess of 50 percent of base pay, far in excess of industry standards." So, as a colleague puts it, "let's just say that if you perform well, they make sure you're paid appropriately."

Kegs at the office

The "amazing" and "brand new offices" are a perk, as well, with "spectacular views," a "game room," "two cafeterias," a "giant plasma TV with an X-Box" and, "believe it or not, a keg." The "professionally equipped workout facility with locker rooms that rival a five star hotel" is nothing to sneeze at either.

Some consultants in the Jersey City office seem a bit disgruntled. One staffer complains of his space, "It's a little annoying that it's in New Jersey," and another notes, "One new office is downtown, another is in New Jersey, and it is not that hard to figure out where the junior staff is located." He adds, "The New Jersey office is very nice, it just takes forever to get to and is very out of the way." Then again, we're told, "most of us don't care. We're only there on Fridays anyways."

There's no crying in consulting

On that note, Opera staffers typically spend four days a week on the road, and the "traveling can get very intense." "We have many clients all over the country and all over the world," explains a senior associate, "and since we have one main office to serve

them, it means we need to travel extensively.” However, “the firm does everything to accommodate good travel conditions.” And it’s not a given that everyone will be a road warrior. Specific travel schedules are “completely project-dependent,” so consultants “could be traveling every week or could be based in New York for a month together.” But it’s best to have your bags ready: As one associate bluntly states, “I have no sympathy for people who complain about traveling ... It is pretty clear that the chance of traveling is realistic, so you just have to be prepared and deal with it.”

Others note, with more sensitivity, that “management is willing to work with you to minimize traveling if you have special circumstances.” A junior staffer explains, “After your first six to eight months, you generally have some degree of control over your project assignments. If you want to stay local, they try to honor the request; if you want to travel (and some people do), you can.” Plus, we’re told that many “projects are located in the New York/tri-state area,” so as one engagement manager notes, “I have complete flexibility in terms of deciding whether to stay overnight at the client’s location or commute back home.” But that’s not a guarantee either—others have been “staffed in Arizona (four days a week) for eight months,” or have spent “45 days in London for a project.” In all, says an associate, “some consultants have traveled a lot and others not at all,” but the “firm’s staffing function does a good job of matching a consultant’s interest in traveling with an engagement that requires heavy travel.”

Cue the violins

On the upside, says an associate, “more travel means less time stuck at your desk.” A decent proposition, given that most staffers report working “between 60 to 80 hours a week, on average,” although some weeks can require as little as “55 to 60” hours or, “at its worst, closer to the 90 to 100 range.” “Though I’ve had to work 90-plus-hour weeks on my project, from what I’ve been able to observe, that is the exception, not the rule here at Opera.” Still, there’s no question that “hours are long and demanding,” which can make it “difficult to balance life and work.” “In general,” an engagement manager finds, “folks at Opera tend to work harder than at other firms, with more frequent late nights and weekend work.”

Average balance

Nonetheless, a source explains, “I have been able to find a balance between work and life that I like, but it took effort and push-back on my part.” Insiders claim that “the firm is taking steps to ensure that work/life balance is taken more seriously.” For example, respondents say there’s “no face time” required, they “can work from home” and they can “take days off to be with family,” provided “the work is done on time.” In addition, “managers are usually quite flexible with special circumstances that routinely arise in our daily lives” and “will try to work with you if you have any personal constraints that come up.” A midlevel staffer comments, “My principal respects, almost 100 percent of the time, personal/family commitments that I have planned, as long as they are communicated in advance and there is no imminent deadline coming on.” A colleague adds, “As I’m married with children, I’ve always been staffed to projects for local clients.” In all, remarks an associate, “I’d venture to say that Opera is not dissimilar to any other management consulting firm in the work/life balance it offers.”

Reaching out

We’re told that a number of staffers are “involved with the community, so managers try to work around these commitments and allow them to participate.” Opera’s corporate philanthropic efforts are “nothing major,” and “community involvement is usually spearheaded by someone in the firm that has this interest, and the firm helps promote and sponsor the event,” explains an engagement manager. Specific activities that the firm has supported include clothing drives, New York Cares days, a pro bono project for an area art museum and “work in India with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.” Others add that “we have a volunteering program to get involved in community work,” and “every other month we have company presentations about charity work that we can get involved in.”

PA Consulting Group

4601 North Fairfax Drive
Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22203
Phone: (571) 227-9000
Fax: (571) 227-9001
www.paconsulting.com

LOCATIONS

Arlington, VA (North American HQ)

London (Global HQ)

Cambridge, MA • Chicago, IL • Denver, CO • Los Angeles, CA • Madison, WI • New York, NY • Princeton, NJ • San Francisco, CA

Offices throughout Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and Oceania

PRACTICE AREAS

Asset Management & Infrastructure • Benchmarking & Market Analytics • Complex Programs • ERP Services • Geographic Information Systems • HR Transformation • Knowledge Management • Product Development & Delivery • Rapid Business Review • Risk Management • ROI Strategy • Service Management • Solution Builder • Sourcing

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

CEO: Alan Middleton

2008 Employees: 3,000

2007 Employees: 3,400

2007 Revenue: £364 million

2006 Revenue: £374.4 million



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Entrepreneurial"
- "Too model-centric"
- "Strongest presence in Europe"
- "Large but anonymous"

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#18 – Formal Training

UPPERS

- "Scale—not too big, not too small"
- Diversity of assignments
- "Flexibility to shape your career"
- Lucrative employee share ownership plan

DOWNERS

- "The unflappable greed"
- Lack of brand in the US
- "Extremely intense and unforgiving"
- Internal bureaucracy can be constraining

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.paconsulting.com/join_pa

THE SCOOP

British born

PA Consulting is based in London, but its U.S. operations have grown to include offices in nine cities: Cambridge, Denver, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Madison, Princeton, San Francisco and Arlington. The firm employs just over 400 professionals in the States, who serve clients in a number of industries, with particular emphasis on communications, media and entertainment, defense and government, energy, financial services, health care and life sciences, and international development.

Elsewhere in the world, PA Consulting has offices in Europe and Latin America, with 3,000 employees in approximately 35 countries. These employees are owners, too—PA Consulting is independent and owned by its people. Its consulting expertise covers a wide range of services and solutions, including management strategy, information technology, human resources, complex program delivery, operations improvement, risk management, sourcing and more.

A story of survival

The firm's initials stand for Personnel Administration, the name under which it was launched in 1943. During World War II, Great Britain faced a seemingly insurmountable problem: It needed to churn out weaponry and supplies at a faster-than-usual rate, but with so many workers on the front lines, its remaining workforce was relatively unskilled. Entrepreneur Ernest Butten and two associates founded Personnel Administration Ltd. to advise the manufacturing sector on improving management and boosting productivity; at one plant, the firm provided training for women seeking to participate in the war effort by assembling bombers.

In the postwar years, PA kept growing along with Britain's economy. Increased demand for civilian goods put new strains on former manufacturing clients, and veterans' return to work presented new management and human resources challenges. By the 1970s, the firm was ranked with Booz Allen Hamilton and McKinsey as the largest consultancies in the world; it also opened offices in Europe, Australia and Asia. Founder Butten retired in 1970 after transferring his 100 percent stake in the firm to a trust, which he created to keep the firm under employee control. However, the ensuing decades hit PA hard: Several years of low revenue, coupled with an overall decline in the consulting industry left it with a fraction of its former headcount.

Nevertheless, PA was an early competitor in the technology consulting field, developing expertise in both tech selection and application. Its offices in Princeton, N.J., and Melbourn, England, became hubs for the technology practice. More recently, the firm has gotten back on its feet. Its U.S. presence grew significantly with the 2000 purchase of Hagler Bailly, an American consulting firm, for which PA shelled out \$96 million.

From cleanups to revenue growth

PA has tackled some big assignments recently, including a job for a major U.K. equipment rental business. The company's parent, an international group with over £2.3 billion in annual revenue, wanted PA to spark a turnaround, with key goals of reducing the balance sheet, improving returns on the remaining capital and smoothing strategic alignment with an important partner organization. Through evaluation of the market, the rental business' customers and its operational performance in 320 locations, PA was able to model a range of scenarios that could lead to a turnaround. Ultimately, it delivered a plan that reconfigured the operational capability of the business and showed clear projections for improved financial performance going forward.

Another client, a \$4 billion life sciences company, set a goal of tripling its revenue in five years. Increased competition, tougher regulatory standards and sluggish R&D were holding the company back, so PA's rapid business review team formulated a strategic plan to meet the earnings goal by reducing costs and finding new revenue opportunities.

A frequent player on the tech and telecom scene, PA also helped a major wireless operator grow by 40 percent in one of its largest and most challenging regions. PA's role involved setting up a program management structure to improve performance in the region, and simultaneously creating small "tiger teams" to work in key markets at the delivery level.

Consolidation overseas

At the close of 2007, PA quietly shuttered its offices in Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia. The move came as a surprise to many; after all, PA had a solid history of government contracts in Asia, and the region's booming tech landscape seemed an ideal place for expert IT consultants. But former PA consultants told *ConsumerWorld Hong Kong* that the reason for the shutdown could be traced to the other side of the world: The firm "had gotten ahead of itself with large government contracts in the U.K., and when those deals ended or wound down, the board reviewed costs and found it made no sense to continue Asian operations."

Profitable ventures

In June 2008, PA staff shareholders agreed to a demerger of the ventures business (now known as Ipex). Jon Moynihan, executive chairman, welcomed the news, saying, "The demerger is a very positive step for both PA and Ipex and will help us to operate more effectively." Ipex is independent from PA and has its own management team, led by Martin Stapleton. It is backed by funding of £60 million and currently has a portfolio of ventures that includes AditOn, a mobile advertising application service provider, Aegate, which provides authentication services for pharmaceutical products (an attempt to limit fraud and improve patient safety), and Auto-txt. This recent venture is a vehicle telematics and design and manufacturing business, supplying systems for stolen vehicle tracking and onboard infotainment. The technology has already been adopted by Aston Martin, Land Rover and Jaguar.

Fighting the cyber wars

PA Consulting's busy federal and defense services practice has developed expertise in a very modern concern: cyberterrorism. It's become an issue for government clients around the world, especially after the 2007 botnet attack that brought down the Estonian government's computer network for three weeks. Experts believed the attacks came from Russian computers, but the Russian government denied any involvement.

Tom Mullen, a member of PA's management team and the head of its federal defense and services practice, told TechNewsWorld in April 2008 that the cyber wars had dramatically altered the tech landscape for his clients. "Irregular warfare has traditionally been the province of the weak against the strong, but that is changing with cyber warfare," he said. According to Mullen, his teams had learned that identifying the origin of the attack—tracing it to a single computer—can't always determine who's behind the hack. Worse, skilled hackers can seize control of computers in other countries to launch the attack, leaving government clients in the dark about who's really after their network. "There has been a mini arms race amongst China, Russia and the U.S. for network supremacy," Mullen added. "We can expect more attacks like this to test a nation's capabilities both offensively and defensively."

PA's alternative reality

PA has been getting involved in the cyber world in other ways as well. Hoping to attract new talent and to appeal to the younger, tech-savvy generation, PA has established an "office" and full-on recruiting efforts in *Second Life*—the online virtual community. The virtual office has a "greeter" to introduce the firm, as well as a recruitment specialist to address questions about career opportunities. It allows candidates to explore what the firm has to offer, while remaining completely anonymous if they wish.

PA leadership expects that its experience in *Second Life* may give the firm the lead in working with clients who wish to build 3D "immersive environments" to do things like collect customer feedback, involve customers in design and eventually use virtual reality as a customer service and interaction channel. To be "teleported" straight to the island where PA's office is located, clients and candidates alike can simply click on a link found on the firm's web site.

GETTING HIRED

Wide-open field

PA Consulting hires at all levels of experience, considering those with undergraduate and graduate degrees for the same analyst recruitment process, and reserving more senior positions for those with relevant work experiences. The firm describes itself as a meritocracy, and suggests that excellent performance will meet with excellent progress. For those curious about the desired educational credentials, the FAQ section of the company's careers page states, "Many of our business areas accept applications from any degree discipline. However, our IT and technology and innovation practices, for example, prefer mathematics or science-based degrees, such as computer science, electronic engineering, mechanical engineering or physics." Schools targeted for recruitment tend to be elite institutions—Duke, MIT, USC, UCLA, Boston University and the Ivies, among others. One source makes note of the firm's "strong relationships with MBA schools in the Northeast."

Put to the test

PA's interview and screening process is "thorough and selective," according to one insider. "The assessment center—where groups of prospective employees are put through individual and group exercises—is particularly effective." A source in New York lays out the steps in the interview sequence: "There will be an initial screening interview, followed by an assessment day in which a technical (subject matter) interview and a consulting interview take place, as well as some testing (verbal, numerical and a consulting case study). The final step is an interview with one of the senior leaders." A consultant analyst finds the process "a bit disorganized, requiring a candidate to come back multiple times (five-plus times in some situations)." Another insider describes it, more charitably, as "careful, but reasonable."

Candidates, during interviews, will be faced with hypothetical "business challenges." A source presents possible queries: "Give me an example of a time when you had to resolve a complex problem. How would you go about addressing the declining performance of one of your co-workers?" A managing consultant explains, "The case questions are designed to identify a potential recruit's ability to work in a team, process a large amount of information to arrive at a set of recommendations and present those back."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

It is work, after all

Respondents describe PA's culture in a way that seems to reflect the focused, straightforward nature of the firm. PA's atmosphere is, as one insider succinctly puts it, "business-like and focused," while another calls it "driven." A source in New York grants that there is "no hand-holding," but finds that co-workers are friendly. Echoing this sentiment is a source in Cambridge, who calls it "hardworking, but fun and fair." And in the eyes of another insider, the culture is "bureaucratic, but energetic," while a colleague says he appreciates that the firm "grants autonomy and freedom to develop new ideas."

And on the subject of autonomy, a consultant reports that staffers "have the opportunity to interact with clients' top-level management." One partner comments that these relationships are possible because the firm does not have a "hierarchical internal structure." However, this interaction, as well as overall relationships with internal management, really seem to depend upon one's direct supervisors. A source in Cambridge states, "I find most coaching and feedback occurs through assignment management. PA does not have strong commitment to effective line management."

But life still takes precedence

Despite the seeming intensity of the culture, PA allows for a work/life balance that's healthier than most. An analyst in Madison relates, "I appreciate the trust the company gives in managing your own working schedule. As long as I meet my deadlines and

provide excellent work and customer service, the working schedule is almost irrelevant. It may mean working a little extra on other days or weekends to allow for that kind of flexibility, but how can you argue against that logic?" Another source cites the "good vacation allowance," and describes being "able to work from home when necessary." The contact adds that "every effort is made to ensure that consultants, where possible, work near their base office. If this is not possible, typically projects operate on a 3-4-5 basis (no more than three nights and four days away from base office, with the fifth day spent in the base office). There are also continual assessments looking at what more PA can do to balance work/life." The meritocratic structure of the firm lends itself to balance as well. An insider finds that "your personal time is respected; you are not judged by your attendance, but on the quality of your contribution." Most consultants report working 50 to 60 hours per week, and in the grand scheme of things, insiders don't feel too overwhelmed. As an analyst puts it, "The busy and slower times seem to average out over the year, so I can't complain."

The necessity of travel plays into work/life balance, too, but most respondents expected that when they took the job. "Travel is the norm for consultants in the U.S.," says one staffer. "Weekly commutes are most common, with Fridays back in the base office." An insider views the issue realistically, remarking that travel "depends on the assignment, but this is the same for most consulting companies. However, PA does prefer that we operate from client sites where possible to ensure that we build up a better understanding of their business and culture." Most sources say they are on the road between two and three days a week. It's "no more than one would expect for consulting," an insider comments.

Keeping an edge

The firm helps to ensure that its employees are well trained. An insider attests, "Both official and unofficial training are offered. We get eight days of official PA training, as well as several days of practice-specific training, and the option of external courses if we want them (provided they are in alignment with our objectives)." A colleague notes that "most training is on the job for a specific practice, but general skills required for all employees is official." The usefulness of the training may depend on one's point of view, however. A consultant observes, "Sometimes courses seem to be required by rank and not necessarily based on what is pertinent to one's specific job." A principal consultant in New York would disagree, however, insisting that it's "very much in control of the individual as to what training they receive, when and how."

Promotion by proof

We're told that at PA, moving up in the ranks is a matter of performance. One source attests, "Promotion is based entirely on merit, and so it is difficult to put a timescale on promotions." According to another, "Average time at a rank is two years, but some take four or more. Promotion is strictly merit-based." But a colleague is highly critical of the system, stating, "The performance measuring system is full of ambiguities and implies objective 360-degree review, while in reality there are only two metrics that contribute to advancement: profitability and utilization." A consultant analyst says, "It's up to the consultant to hit certain performance metrics for promotion, but you rarely ever see anyone moving very fast through the ranks." A source in Cambridge has another qualm about the promotion system, in that "there is significant pressure to continue upward, rather than support to progress laterally."

Piece of the pie

In addition to salary (which some respondents deem "below industry standards"), PA consultants enjoy the usual package of benefits (such as health insurance, a 401(k) plan, sick days and vacation) and a celebrated perk in the form of stock bonuses. As a managing consultant explains, "PA is a privately held company and operates an internal share plan. This plan is a substantial part of my compensation package, over and above my base salary and bonus (the share price growth is impressive)." Another source calls this a "critical aspect" of compensation, noting that bonuses are "awarded part in stock and part in cash." One source mentions, as well, the perk of a "daily allowance, rather than receipt-based claims for daily out-of-pockets" when traveling, and a managing consultant points out that "PA also offers cash prizes to consultants or admin staff that have been nominated for going above and beyond the call of duty."

Faces and races

The firm stays conscious of the need for diversity, but there is work to be done still. Regarding gender proportionality, an insider says PA is “actively building a higher percentage of women at all levels, especially at the more senior levels.” A consultant in Cambridge praises the “strong diversity program,” and says there are “many recent female hires in the U.S., even in the more IT-focused practices.” A source in Madison relates, “Our physical office happens to have more women than men. It’s not something you see very often in a consulting environment.”

The commitment to diversity extends to minorities as well, as the firm is “making a particular effort to encourage more applications from minorities.” However, an insider in Washington, D.C., sees “practically no minorities in consulting positions,” and an analyst wonders if it could be “due to low brand recognition at college campuses and in the marketplace. The firm is still known as a British firm, which isn’t the best pitch to a diverse candidate.”

Meeting social needs

Staffers are encouraged to participate in charity events. A source reveals, “Efforts include fund-raising events, pro bono consulting to nonprofits, donating to charities and community volunteering. An example of this was a recent drive to help clean up a local park.” Another mentions “volunteering for soup kitchens and participating in charity walks.” There is, however, a set allotment of days for these pursuits. A consultant in New York reports that “each consultant can spend three days a year on charity/volunteering.”

Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC

455 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10022
Phone: (212) 644-2300
Fax: (212) 644-2320
www.pearlmeyer.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

Atlanta, GA
Boston, MA
Charlotte, NC
Chicago, IL
Houston, TX
Los Angeles, CA

PRACTICE AREAS

Compensation Surveys
Director Compensation
Employee Compensation
Executive Compensation

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
President & CEO: David N. Swinford
2008 Employees: 100+
2007 Employees: 100+

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#7 – Travel Requirements
#10 – Hours in the Office
#16 (Tie) – Compensation
#16 – Offices

Diversity

#16 – Diversity for Women
#18 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- “Highly specialized—you’ll learn skills that will make you a rare commodity in the job market”
- “Small-company environment provides greater room for growth”

DOWNERS

- Constant awareness of the hierarchy
- “Extended periods of feeling overworked after extended periods of having nothing to do”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.pearlmeyer.com/firm/careers

THE SCOOP

Find out what you're worth

Pearl Meyer & Partners, headquartered in New York, specializes in executive compensation strategy and planning. The firm guides the senior management, boards of directors and human resources departments of corporations in determining pay and other rewards at every level of their enterprise. The goal of any engagement is to align compensation with long-term value targets in a manner that will satisfy all parties involved: shareholders, officers and staff. PM&P's clients, which number over 1,000, include Fortune 500 companies, emerging high-growth players and nonprofits.

All of the firm's core practices deal with compensation, with services breaking down in a narrow, but precise, spectrum. Among these services are salary programs, annual incentives, value creation and performance measurement, contracts, severance agreements, change-in-control arrangements, equity programs, competitive intelligence and compensation surveys. The firm also conducts extensive research, ensuring that it can serve as an up-to-date resource with trustworthy benchmarking.

Splintered off

PM&P, founded in 1989 and acquired by Clark Consulting in 2000, was passed on to a new owner in March 2007, following a labyrinthine transaction agreement between its former parent and AEGON N.V., a Dutch life insurance and pension group. AEGON, in purchasing Clark Consulting, allowed a special asset exchange agreement that resulted in PM&P and other divisions being sold to Clark Wamberg, LLC, an investor group created expressly for this purpose by Clark Consulting executives Tom Wamberg, Jim Benson and Ken Kies. Following these events, in May 2007, David N. Swinford, then head of the New York office, succeeded Joseph R. Rich as CEO and president. Rich was subsequently named chairman of the board.

Checking on paychecks

The firm's compensation surveys practice releases CHiPS compensation surveys and managed surveys, as well as custom surveys. The CHiPS family of surveys are broad studies that provide data on segments of the employee population, such as recent college grads, customer-focused positions and, of course, upper-level executives and managers. Managed surveys look at specialized job areas, such as scientists and engineers, or salaries within outsourcing environments. PM&P's custom surveys are usually designed to tackle a single organization's unique employee population segments, which may have particular credentials or backgrounds that would make benchmarking difficult. A custom survey may be contracted by a company employing a large number of expatriates, or with positions requiring high skill and experience, but minimal outside demand.

Attention to detail

Aside from client engagements and surveys, PM&P's senior consultants often appear at major industry conferences and publish articles and white papers in trade journals. Consultants are also quoted frequently in major publications such as *The New York Times*, *BusinessWeek*, *Forbes* and *The Wall Street Journal*. In January 2008, for example, PM&P President David Swinford acted as a panelist at The Corporate Directors Forum, an event meant to foster dialogue between directors, management and shareholders. Swinford's panel was called "What are 'Pay for Performance' & 'External Pay Equity?' What Makes Sense?" The firm also held a seat for the February 2008 Annual Survey Providers Panel Meeting, an open Q&A session featuring leading survey providers.

Recent PM&P publications include "Tips for Your Year-End Compensation Reviews," penned by the new head of the New York office Peter Lupo, and appearing in the November 2007 issue of *Workspan*. The piece discusses the best methods of utilizing new salary data available, due to revised SEC rules. That same month, Swinford's article, "What Every Compensation Committee Should Ask Its Consultant," was printed in *Director's Monthly*, shedding light on the search for proper advisors.

GETTING HIRED

Brush up on Excel

The “extensive and thorough” hiring process at PM&P aims to make sure the firm is “hiring the right individual for the role and ensuring a good fit in the long run,” insiders say. The firm recruits “from many top schools in the greater Boston area as well as other major cities across the country.” Qualified candidates generally have one or two phone interviews, followed by “in-person interviews” with at least one case study. Final-round interviews are usually with “someone from each level of the consulting staff (one at a time).”

Specifics, however, vary by the “level of hire.” A managing director explains, “At the managing director and vice president level, it is generally a multioffice process, as candidates are rotated through several offices for evaluation. Lower-level candidates are generally interviewed within one office.” He adds that the “number of interviews probably ranges from three to four on the low end, to eight to 10 on the high end.” A newbie analyst recalls that, in his case, “the first few interviews were personality and resume questioning sessions,” followed by “two case interviews concerning strategy.” We’re also told that “more junior folks” sometimes take “an Excel proficiency test” and a writing test. A recent hire mentions one question applicants might encounter: “Was there a time when you had multiple deadlines, and how did you deal with such a situation?”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Professional but relaxed

PM&P insiders say that the firm is “professional” but also “relaxed.” A New York-based employee reports that the “corporate culture varies by office,” warning that “the Northeast offices seem to be the most conventional or demanding offices.” Nonetheless, most staffers across the country say the environment strikes a balance between being “intellectually stimulating,” “fast-paced,” “hardworking,” “success-driven” and “pressure-intensive,” while at the same time “energizing,” “fun,” “friendly” and “collaborative.” As a vice president puts it, PM&P has “a collegial environment with enough structure to get things done, but enough flexibility to do great work.”

One newbie finds that “everyone works well together and is always willing to lend a hand.” “We’re small,” notes a colleague, which means “it’s far easier to make a name for yourself than at the larger firms.” At the same time, “we are growing very quickly.” A junior source in Chicago adds, “I’ve found the culture to be very welcoming. Upper management is very supportive, and wants to develop analysts’ talents as much as possible.” In fact, he continues, “the managing directors are insanely nice and down-to-earth people. They’re not stuffy or unapproachable, as one might expect for executive management.”

Seasonal spikes

Although one consultant reports consistent workweeks of 80 to 90 hours, that kind of intensity is rare. Most respondents say their schedules hover around 50- to 55-hour weeks. Still, we’re advised that “consulting is cyclic,” and “work hours vary by season,” which means that, “at times, we have a good work/life balance, and other times it is very difficult.” Although “people are respectful of personal commitments,” adds a co-worker, “sometimes work takes priority.”

Some say these busy periods can be overwhelming: “There are times when we have extremely quick (or unreasonable) turnarounds. In times like these, it feels like a sweatshop,” complains a Boston-based consultant. But others say PM&P makes concessions for those who wish for more personal time. “I take care of my nephews. I was recently married,” an analyst shares, adding, “My firm allowed me to work from home, and have a more flexible work schedule.” A consultant agrees, “I work a compressed workweek and telecommute when needed. I may work later at night or on the weekends to accommodate my personal life (I’m a working mother), but PM&P is understanding, and as long as I get my work done and keep my clients happy, I have ample flexibility with my work schedule.” Another echoes the sentiment, saying, “I work from home two days per week.

This greatly enhances my work/life balance, eliminating commute time and allowing me to have lunch with my family.” Additionally, the firm has “summer Fridays,” which means staffers get off “every other Friday between Memorial and Labor Day (work permitting).” One source feels that striving for work/life balance comes at a price: “You can ‘enjoy’ a good work/life balance if you wish, but not without your peers and supervisors looking at you as a lesser consultant.”

Newbies stay home

On the whole, insiders are pleased that there’s “very little travel” involved in their projects, because when travel does come up, “balancing home and work is much more stressful.” Lower-level staffers have an easier go of it, since “travel is more frequent at the higher levels in the firm.” But higher-ups don’t seem to mind being on the road—a managing director notes, “it is frequently a pleasant break from being in the office.”

Monthly massages

Respondents at all levels say the compensation is “fair—not excessive and not weak.” “We do work hard,” comments a source, “so I think the good compensation is warranted.” Another feels that “bonuses are very generous.” Additional perks include “thoughtful surprise reward gifts,” “tuition reimbursement,” a “company holiday outing,” a “health club allowance” and a “nonsmoking rebate.”

A Boston-based staffer notes, “We have catered breakfasts every once in a while, which generally correspond to a holiday.” Consultants in Los Angeles tell us that their office “has a massage therapist who comes once a month,” while New Yorkers have “periodic chair massages.” Offices vary around the country, with New York’s getting the lowest ratings, but most spaces are “bright” and “newly designed,” with “free drinks, coffee and snacks.” An analyst in Chicago adds, “Coming in as an entry-level analyst, I was actually surprised at the size of my cube and desk. I have more than enough room, and the desk provides ample space to spread out.”

To help foster a sense of community, an insider mentions that PM&P has staff in each office “dedicated to setting up get-togethers/parties/celebrations/community activities for all employees.” This includes getting staffers “involved in local charities and sponsorships,” such as making “no-sew blankets for Cradles to Crayons,” participating in an “adopt-a-child at Christmas” program and participating in the “Stair Climb to the Top to help raise money for the YMCA by climbing 75 stories.” A managing director notes that the firm is a “generally heavy supporter of organizations related to our business,” such as WorldatWork and the National Association of Stock Plan Professionals.

Training that’s top notch

In addition to their large cubes, analysts receive mentoring and “an official new-hire orientation manual.” One source reports, “There was a great orientation training at a hotel in Boston after I signed on.” A colleague notes that there is a “training and development team responsible for providing us with training sessions on various topics during the year.” She adds that “during our consultants’ meetings (all levels attend—analyst and up), various projects are presented as a learning opportunity.” “We have made an effort to have more formal training sessions,” says an insider, “so over the past few years, this area has greatly improved.” Still, we’re told that most training at PM&P is “informal” and built around “learning on the go,” but nonetheless, it’s “top notch.”

Passable percentages

When it comes to diversity, insiders say PM&P is “very receptive to females on all levels.” One respondent comments, “At the managing director level, there is almost an equal ratio of men to women,” and an analyst says “25 percent of the partners are women,” further noting that “at other levels, it is a greater percentage.” Although there are “very few African-Americans” at the firm, there are “a lot of minorities” in general.

Point B

1420 Fifth Avenue
Suite 2200
Seattle, WA 98101
Phone: (206) 517-5000
www.pointb.com

LOCATIONS

Chicago, IL
Denver, CO
Los Angeles, CA
Phoenix, AZ
Portland, OR
San Francisco, CA
Seattle, WA

PRACTICE AREAS

Application Integration • Business Case Development •
Clinical Information Systems • Customer Relations
Management • Enterprise Resource Planning • Financial
Systems • Interim Management • Major Business Change •
Merger/Acquisition Integration • Offshore Partner Integration
• Process Improvement • Project/Program Management •
Project Turnarounds • Recruiting • Regulatory Compliance •
Rollout Management • Sarbanes/Oxley Compliance •
Software Selection • Strategy/Organization Development •
Technology Operations/Security

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Co-Founders: Jim Hodge, Tim Jenkins & Darran Littlefield
2007 Employees: 350 +
2007 Revenue: \$80 million

UPPERS

- Consultants rarely, if ever, travel
- Strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork

DOWNERS

- No physical offices
- Self-directed structure is not a good fit for everyone

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.pointb.com/careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Fresh"
- "Work/life balance at the expense of culture"
- "Project management focus, local work"
- "Older average age"

THE SCOOP

Bringing in ringers

Point B Solutions Group specializes in project leadership—meaning, rather than providing exterior advisory services, the firm's professionals step into, and subsequently steward to completion, clients' critical projects. These clients range from small, burgeoning organizations all the way up to Fortune 100 companies. In the past, Point B has joined and completed projects launched by the American Red Cross, Microsoft Corp., Alaska Airlines, Kaiser Permanente, Hollywood Entertainment and Washington Mutual, among others. The firm hires selectively based on prior experience, boasting a roster of consultants who carry between seven and 15 years of experience in the biz.

In addition to its founding office in Seattle, Point B also has consulting practices in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Portland and San Francisco. Client engagements are evaluated with regard to geography, with efforts made to staff each engagement locally, rather than flying teams long distances to client sites. The firm believes this approach improves the quality of its work, both by cutting down on the fatigue of employees and by ensuring a deeper understanding and commitment to the local market.

From point A

Point B was founded in 1995 by Tim Jenkins, Darran Littlefield and Jim Hodge, all formerly of Andersen Consulting (now Accenture). According to *The Seattle Times*, Jenkins chose to leave Andersen upon learning that he was to be sent on an assignment away from home for two years. Jenkins is quoted as saying, "This just wasn't the life I wanted to live." Together with Hodge and Littlefield, Jenkins created an institution that would promote a healthy work/life balance, requiring minimal travel and avoiding rigid work hours.

In the service of sci-fi

The firm's service offerings are fairly open-ended, reflecting the core practicality of its approach. Consultants may be called on to oversee a merger or acquisition, spark a turnaround for a struggling division, find and develop a new executive, or even to act as a catalyst to boost productivity and profit—or, as the company puts it, to "get some quick wins" for the client.

Several years ago, for example, Point B was hired by senior management at Seattle's Experience Music Project (EMP) to guide the opening of their new project: the Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame (SFM). The museum, to be added as a new wing for the nonprofit arts and culture organization, would have three floors of multimedia exhibits and interactive booths, the design and creation of which would involve four Hollywood studios, in addition to a large technical team from EMP. Point B entered the project four months before the scheduled grand opening. The firm facilitated teamwork between technical groups, set and managed checkpoint goals, and kept the building and design process focused and on schedule. The EMP/SFM building today has received millions of visitors and has generated hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact for the community.

Giant steps

Point B has enjoyed highly accelerated growth over the last couple of years. In May 2007, it opened offices in both Chicago and Los Angeles. Three clients, ResMed, Red Digital Cinema and Providence Health and Services, had already retained the services of the LA office on the day it opened. A year earlier, in March 2006, the firm inaugurated a San Francisco location. This physical expansion has been mirrored financially. Companywide revenue for the past four years has grown 25 percent annually, with the firm completing over 700 client engagements in 2007 alone.

Drawing attention

The firm's profile has been growing as well. In October 2007, it was named a Top Small Workplace by *The Wall Street Journal*. The paper collaborated with Winning Workplaces, a nonprofit provider of services to small businesses, to select 15 companies with workplace environments that promote collegiality and professional growth, while also offering excellent benefits. The field of nominees totaled 850 organizations. Additionally, in March 2006, Point B was one of seven organizations honored with a Small Jewels award from *Consulting* magazine. The publication gives the honor in recognition of a small company's client impact, corporate culture and innovative contributions to consulting. Nominees are required to have fewer than 250 billable consultants (thus Point B's exemption from nomination in 2007). *Consulting* also named Point B third on its 2006 list of the Best Firms to Work For.

GETTING HIRED

Apply any time

Point B does not typically make hiring decisions based on immediate staffing needs; instead, says the firm, it's simply looking for people who will make long-term contributions to the business, whenever such people come along. As a result, the recruiting process may take different forms depending on market conditions and the candidates themselves.

As a rule, it takes "a few weeks" to move through the process, from resume submission through interview rounds. According to the firm, hiring involves "a comprehensive set of interviews conducted by Point B associates." Besides sizing up candidates' skills and experience, interviewers—all of whom perform client work on a daily basis—are expected to provide potential hires with perspective into the firm's culture. The interview process is aimed at having discussions that will allow both the candidate and Point B to assess long-term mutual fit.

Professionals most welcome

So what makes a Point B'er? The firm says it's looking for "experienced project leaders who enjoy helping clients achieve measurable results." Furthermore, it describes ideal candidates as "self-directed professionals who focus on exceeding client expectations, are interested in flexing their entrepreneurial muscles and thrive in an environment that favors cooperation over competition and rigid hierarchies."

An undergraduate degree is required and an MBA is "encouraged," with the most favored backgrounds being in industry, project management or leadership in technology, operations or process improvement. Previous consulting experience is a plus, of course, as is demonstrated aptitude for all things tech-related. "The company generally hires only consultants with at least five years of consulting experience," an insider notes, "since the jobs entail much autonomy with clients."

Candidates are encouraged to log on to www.pointb.com, where they can submit an online application (with resume and cover letter) through the careers section. Because of Point B's open-ended hiring philosophy, applications are considered throughout the year.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Unlike the others

There's a "unique work environment" at Point B, sources say; although the firm fields consultants in seven cities across the U.S., it "doesn't take clients outside those cities, and so rarely asks employees to travel." With "no brick-and-mortar offices," there's no official headquarters, and "all consultants are based at home when not on site with clients." Because of this one-of-a-kind

setup, one insider says, “they’ve been able to attract some great people who’d otherwise have left the consulting industry for something else.”

Although Point B wins praise for its ability “to create a flexible work structure in an industry known for inflexibility,” some say all that freedom comes at a price. “One particular challenge with the company’s structure is fostering collaboration, as there’s no traditional office where employees can interact,” a Point B’er explains. To solve this problem, staffers nationwide “meet six to 10 times a year for ‘watering holes’ at restaurants where they can get to know their colleagues and discuss work issues. The company also hosts an annual two-day retreat at a resort for every employee and a guest.”

The “self-imposed limits on travel,” a boon to road-weary consultants and those with families, have also meant that the firm “has had to turn down some prospective clients” located outside the cities in which it operates. Regardless, a consultant says there’s enough work to go around: “Work has been so plentiful that the company has nearly doubled in size since late 2004.”

Flat rules

There’s no “traditional corporate hierarchy” at Point B, where a peer-based, or “flat,” structure has ruled since the firm was founded. A source explains, “Today, about 90 percent of Point B’s employees hold the same title: senior associate. But those senior associates can be selected to lead particular projects where their expertise is most needed.” The firm calls itself “a company of peers,” and employees in leadership positions are dubbed account managers. These senior-level project leaders head up projects at client sites; each Point B city has a local “market leader” who oversees business in that area. A firmwide group of operational leaders supervise internal operations and development.

How do you like your pay?

Even pay and benefits are “self-driven and innovative” at Point B. “Employees get no paid time off,” an insider explains, “but instead are paid hourly and can take off as much time as they want.” And “instead of a matching contribution to the company 401(k), employees receive annual bonuses based on the extra work they’ve done over the course of the year and their individual performance.”

On its web site, Point B delves deeper into the comp model, noting that consultants are paid hourly for billable work. Annual bonuses are “based on value contributed to Point B in the following areas: serving our clients, growing our business, developing our people and running our firm.” Because employees have such flexible schedules, some choose to focus primarily on billable work, whereas others generate a big chunk of income through activities that trigger higher bonuses.

In addition to bonuses, Point B offers an employee health care plan and a flexible spending account, short- and long-term disability coverage, counseling services and technology reimbursement.

Log on to learn

Because the majority of Point B’ers join the firm with several years of experience under their belt, the firm places special emphasis on professional development. It sponsors employees’ involvement in professional organizations and events, and helps consultants attain project management professional (PMP) certification. To stay sharp on the job, notes a source, “employees can access an internal knowledge-sharing database where they can pose questions to the rest of the staff.”

Prophet

150 Spear Street, Suite 1500
San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: (415) 677-0909
Fax: (415) 677-9020
www.prophet.com

LOCATIONS

San Francisco, CA (HQ)

Chicago, IL
New York, NY
Hamburg
London
Madrid
Tokyo
Zurich

PRACTICE AREAS

Brand Strategy
Customer Experience
Growth & Innovation
Marketing Strategy & Effectiveness

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman & CEO: Michael Dunn
2008 Employees: 125
2007 Employees: 100

UPPER

- Strong reputation in its niche field

DOWNER

- Limited training and supervision

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.prophet.com/about/careers

THE SCOOP

A prophecy of brand success

Prophet is a global consulting firm specializing in branding, marketing and innovation. Headquartered in San Francisco, the company has additional domestic locations in Chicago and New York, and maintains an international presence through offices in Hamburg, London, Tokyo and Zurich. It serves Fortune 500 clients worldwide, and has completed assignments for such major corporations as Boeing, BP, GE, Monsanto, Harrah's Entertainment, Inc., NBC, Staples and UBS. Its practice areas include brand strategy, customer experience, growth and innovation, and marketing strategy and effectiveness.

Render unto Caesars

Prophet's brand strategy offering delves into a number of issues, from measuring the current state and value of a brand all the way out to complex analytics on market segmentation and positioning. The firm's consultants examine the way a brand affects customer behavior in a given category, manage and track its equity over time, and identify opportunities to branch out into new markets and segments. For larger brand portfolios, the practice also looks into shaping ideal roles and relationships among multiple brands.

As an example of its work, Prophet was recently engaged by Harrah's Entertainment, Inc., to help its flagship Caesars brand address declining sales and an eroding image. Prophet helped answer the question: "What innovative, category-defining offers and operational improvements can be made to maintain premium brand position?" To that end, the firm conducted in-depth ethnographic research with customers to understand the most important experiential elements that were lacking compared to the competition. Using this data, Prophet developed a range of new offers, including gaming concepts, service improvements and more.

Several of those offers were launched, or are currently being implemented, including a new state-of-the-art spa known as Qua Baths & Spa. Qua has been recognized in luxury living magazine *Robb Report*, and made *Spa Magazine's* top-10 list during its first year in operation. The new features have helped generate increased traffic and sales and boosted scores for overall guest satisfaction.

All according to Aaker

Prophet has a strong foundation for brand strategy in its Vice Chairman David Aaker. Aaker is one of the leading authorities on the subject, having published more than 100 articles and 14 books, including *Managing Brand Equity*, *Building Strong Brands*, *Developing Business Strategies*, *Brand Leadership*, *Strategic Market Management* (a tome used by MBA programs, now in its eighth edition) and *Brand Portfolio Strategy*. He is the author of the forthcoming book *Spanning the Silos: The New CMO Imperative*, due out in fall 2008; Aaker also serves as professor emeritus at the Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley, and was honored with the 1996 Paul D. Converse Award for outstanding contributions to the development of marketing. What's more, Aaker is the originator of the Aaker Model (go figure), a widely accepted blueprint for managing single or multiple brands through the application of focused business strategy. In November 2007, he was recognized as one of the top-10 marketers by the Marketing Executives Networking Group, a national organization made up primarily of senior executives. Among the group's list of the most important and influential names in marketing and business, Aaker found his name listed alongside heavyweights such as Steve Jobs, Warren Buffett and Jack Welch. He is also featured in a chapter of *Conversations with Marketing Masters*, published in March 2007, a collection of insights from some of the world's most influential figures in marketing.

Heed the words

Aaker is not the only author in the company. Consultants at Prophet frequently publish books, articles and white papers on branding, marketing and other business subjects. Senior Partner Kevin O'Donnell wrote "Risqué Business: Sex Sells, Or Does

It?” for the April 2008 issue of *Marketing News*. In the piece, O'Donnell ponders the fine line between provocative and offensive messages, and discusses the possibility of offending consumers, rather than enticing them with frank images. Some recent books by Prophet consultants include *Building the Brand-Driven Business*, by CEO Michael Dunn and Senior Partner Scott Davis, and *Brand Asset Management*, also by Davis. Both books are thorough investigations of the strategic needs of, and the driving forces behind, business brands. Both Dunn and Davis have new books slated to appear in 2009.

Prophet also produces its own quarterly newsletter, available online and via e-mail. The March 2008 issue previewed an upcoming book by CEO Dunn, detailed a case study from an engagement with UnitedHealthcare and featured an article on marketing effectiveness.

Traveling insight

To stay up to date on industry trends, and to further raise its industry profile, Prophet sends consultants to conferences and events all over the world, and even sponsors some of its own. In May 2008, O'Donnell spoke at the Conference Board Council on Brand Management in San Jose, Calif. That same month, Partner Mitch Duckler presented at the AMA Strategic Marketing forum in Boston. In September 2008, Prophet will sponsor the European Chief Marketing Office Conference in Zurich, a summit for thought leaders in the industry, where both Aaker and Dunn will give presentations.

GETTING HIRED

Ready to apply?

Potential Propheteers should start by visiting the firm's web site, where open positions are posted on a rolling basis. Candidates may submit cover letters and resumes via e-mail. Those with an undergraduate degree (and a year or more of work experience in strategy consulting, market research or professional services) are eligible for associate consultant positions. According to Prophet, a successful associate applicant will have strong research, analytical, written and verbal skills, the ability to work with limited supervision, a willingness to participate actively in project teams and be computer savvy (including Word, Excel and PowerPoint).

Candidates with an MBA already in hand may apply for manager positions; five or more years of prior business or brand strategy consulting experience is preferred. Manager applicants must also have previous experience leading teams, selling projects and cultivating client relationships.

A senior partner speaks

In a recent interview with MarketingProfs, Prophet Senior Partner Scott Davis shed some light on his firm's recruiting goals. “At Prophet we are looking for a combination of a few things,” he said. “First, it's this idea of operating experience and understanding the types of roles that somebody has played in other companies before—and, more importantly, the responsibilities and the decisions that they were in charge of making at the end of the day. I have to understand what they were accountable for. Next, do they have a combination of line experience and consulting experience? We don't always have the luxury of providing a six-month training program prior to a consultant's first project.”

Davis added that he looks for “a personal connection, or six degrees of separation” between himself and each candidate. He advises job seekers to “use their contacts,” because knowing someone who already works at Prophet “always helps.” Finally, be prepared to demonstrate a knowledge of Prophet's business: “I want to know how much candidates have studied our firm,” Davis explained.

Protiviti Inc.

2884 Sand Hill Road, Suite 200
Menlo Park, CA 94025
Phone: (650) 234-6000
Fax: (650) 234-6998
www.protiviti.com

LOCATIONS

Menlo Park, CA (HQ)

More than 60 offices in the Americas, Europe, Middle East and Asia Pacific

PRACTICE AREAS

Business Operations Improvement
CIO Solutions
Enterprise Application Solutions
Enterprise Information Management
Finance Transformation
Financial Risk Strategy & Management
Governance, Risk & Compliance (GRC)
Internal Audit
Litigation, Restructuring & Investigative Services

THE STATS

Employer Type: Wholly Owned Subsidiary of Robert Half International Inc.

Ticker Symbol: RHI (NYSE)

CEO, Robert Half International Inc.: Harold M. Messmer Jr.

CEO, Protiviti: Joseph A. Tarantino

2008 Employees: 3,300 +

2007 Employees: 2,900 +

2007 Revenue: \$552 million

2006 Revenue: \$543 million

UPPERS

- "Flexibility"
- Friendly co-workers

DOWNERS

- "Very young management team"
- "High turnover"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.protiviti.com/careers



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Great SOX group"
- "Narrow"
- "Still growing"
- "Specialize in the hot topic for the moment"

THE SCOOP

Bringing sexy back to auditing

Do phrases like “Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act” and “standards for attestation engagements” work their way into your daily conversations? If so, consider applying to Protiviti, which has expertise in internal audit and risk management. The firm owes its existence and reputation to helping clients deal with Sarbanes-Oxley, though it continues to move beyond specialization in that area. Since its May 2002 founding, the firm has expanded at a breakneck pace, ballooning to more than 60 offices around the world. Its client list contains 35 percent of the Fortune 100, more than 25 percent of the Fortune 500 and over 20 percent of the Fortune 1000.

Protiviti is a global consulting and internal audit firm composed of experts specializing in risk and advisory services. It helps clients by providing the necessary business process and technology skills to address challenges related to financial and operational risk management; technology risk management and effectiveness; GRC (governance, risk and compliance); and litigation, investigations, turnaround and restructuring. In addition, Protiviti’s internal audit practice offers a range of services, including internal audit activities on a fully outsourced basis and working with existing internal audit functions to supplement teams lacking adequate staff or skills.

Opportunity knocks

When Enron became nothing but a bitter punchline in December 2001, most people could be forgiven for only seeing the downside. In contrast, staffing and consulting firm Robert Half International Inc. (RHI) saw possibilities. When the Enron scandal took down Arthur Andersen, too, RHI founded Protiviti by hiring approximately 760 staff from Andersen’s U.S. internal audit and business risk consulting practices. These hires were separate from the external audit and attestation sections that had run into so many problems with Enron. From that base, the company has now grown to more than 3,300 professionals across the globe.

Soon after its inception, Protiviti aimed to help publicly traded companies that were finding Sarbanes-Oxley (enacted in July 2002) a complex challenge. A May 2007 survey by Financial Executives International found that 78 percent of CFOs thought “the costs of [Sarbanes-Oxley] Section 404 compliance have exceeded the benefits.” Protiviti claims to help cut compliance costs by 30 to 60 percent, in addition to improving the overall quality of internal controls and business processes. The firm likes to say that the i’s in its name all stand for “independence,” and that independence is one of the greatest advantages it offers clients. The fact that publicly traded entities are not the only ones complying with Sarbanes-Oxley has also been a boon to the firm. An August 2006 article in *The Wall Street Journal* noted that more and more closely held companies were bringing themselves in line with the regulations, despite not being legally required to do so.

It doesn’t just happen here

After several large auditing scandals of its own, Japan established a framework of laws similar to Sarbanes-Oxley in June 2006. These laws became informally known as “J-SOX” (as opposed to “US-SOX”). With its unique skills in this area, Protiviti has made a strong push to help companies in Japan meet the new requirements. In August 2007, it held a major webinar, followed by another in March 2008 that focused on year one of J-SOX implementation. Protiviti has also hosted several J-SOX seminars in Tokyo in recent months.

Far and wide

Japan is not the only country where the firm is growing. In October 2006, Protiviti opened offices in both Mumbai and New Delhi. Other 2006 international forays included German offices in both Frankfurt and Düsseldorf, plus offices in Mexico City and São Paulo. In 2007, a third German office was opened in Munich.

After lightning-quick early expansion in the United States, growth in the country has slowed. The only recent opening is a March 2008 office in Charlotte, North Carolina, led by Karen Furstenberg, who brings over 18 years of trench time in accounting, auditing and professional services.

Crunching code

Protiviti has created a variety of software to further aid its clients with internal auditing and risk management. One example is the Governance Portal, a unified technology platform that addresses multiple GRC objectives through five integrated modules—assessment management, audit management, control management, incident management and risk management. The portal helps to manage risk and perform validation and testing, while simultaneously increasing the transparency of compliance mandates. Protiviti has successfully implemented the Governance Portal with more than 300 clients.

A Renaissance risk consulting firm

However, as previously stated, the firm is striving to establish itself as more than just a Sarbanes-Oxley specialist. Its 2008 fact sheet for journalists only mentions Sarbanes-Oxley once, and buries the act in eighth place on a list of business risk areas that it services. In another effort to diversify and expand its capabilities, Protiviti has made a number of acquisitions. In April 2007, it acquired PENTA Advisory Services, LLC, a specialist in restructuring and insolvency services, litigation services, and bankruptcy-related tax, accounting and administrative services. December 2006 saw the purchase of Enspier Technologies, Inc., whose technology and management consulting skills were then used in the establishment of a wholly owned subsidiary focused on public-sector operations: Protiviti Government Services, Inc. And in March 2006, the firm bought P.G. Lewis & Associates, a data forensic investigation and litigation expert on digital evidence in civil and criminal disputes. A month earlier, the firm acquired Creative Options and Radius, two companies that focus on loss prevention and risk management in retail.

Hats off

2007 was a good year for Protiviti in the media. In June 2007, it was named a Risk Consulting Services Leader by Forrester Research's The Forrester Wave™: Risk Consulting Services, Q2 2007. This report positively noted the firm's ability to help "companies identify and prioritize risk to achieving business goals and objectives, developing action plans for clients to effectively manage those risks." The firm was given especially high marks for organization and process design services.

In September 2007, *BusinessWeek* listed the firm, for the second consecutive year, as one of the Best Places to Launch a Career, particularly mentioning the way each new hire is paired with a mentor. The list was based on surveys of career services directors at U.S. colleges, the employers those directors identified and college students. *BusinessWeek* also ranked the firm as offering one of the 50 Best Internships. On top of this, in recent years several individual Protiviti offices have garnered recognition in local media as some of the best places to work in their areas, including its locations in Chicago, Dallas, Fort Lauderdale, Houston, Pittsburgh and Tampa.

GETTING HIRED

School choices

To kick off the recruiting process, students are advised to visit Protiviti's booth at campus career fairs and apply for an interview via their school career centers. According to the firm, its annual recruiting calendar schedules visits to "more than 60 top-tier universities across the country, including but not limited to: Indiana University, Louisiana State University, Notre Dame, Texas A&M, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Southern California, University of Texas, University of Washington and Virginia Tech." An up-to-date list of schools with upcoming recruitment events may be found on the careers section of Protiviti's web site.

For entry-level and internship positions, the firm says applicants should have a degree or major in accounting, finance or management information systems. Graduate and undergraduate candidates from any school may submit a general application online; if there's a position that's a match, recruiters will be in touch to schedule interviews.

Pick a mix

Interview rounds may be a combination of on-campus, on-site and telephone, depending on the candidate's location and interest. The firm notes that "college hires typically complete their first round of interviews on campus." A current consultant recalls going through "eight phone interviews," each one with "a different emphasis." The final round included "one daylong face to face interview in New York."

Ten-hut!

Protiviti "actively recruits" candidates with a military background through its junior military officers hiring program. Per the firm's web site, "the skills gained from the military environment create a solid foundation for a consulting career, as the military values many of the same qualities that we do: the ability to work well in a team-oriented environment; attention to detail; strong analytical, project management and problem-solving skills; and excellent leadership, communication and interpersonal skills."

Interns' turn

Protiviti's eight-week summer internship program is open to MBA or undergraduate students working toward degrees in accounting, finance or management information systems. A minimum overall GPA of 3.0 and a 3.0 major GPA is required.

Each intern class begins with a weeklong National Intern School outside of Chicago. Besides trainings and lectures, the program includes evening social activities. Each intern is assigned three employee mentors, who are expected to help interns learn the ropes and set goals for the duration of the internship. Protiviti says its interns "function in the same manner as our consultants," working on a variety of engagements across industry and product lines. To relax (and take advantage of networking opportunities), the firm schedules several events for interns, including community service opportunities, dinners and sports games.

Intern hopefuls may look for Protiviti recruiters at their schools, attend information sessions and sign up for campus interviews (in some cases, the internship interview rounds may include an on-site visit). Candidates whose schools aren't on Protiviti's target list are not out of luck—anyone can apply for an internship online.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

A little competition

Sources award high marks for the "very friendly corporate culture," adding that most project teams work in a "collaborative atmosphere." Still, one insider senses "a distinct competitiveness under the surface," perhaps because so many Protiviti consultants are "in the same age range—25 to 35 years old." This youthful vibe can also result in some haphazard management; senior consultants are occasionally "forced to scramble at the projects with minimal guidance," laments another respondent.

"As usual for consulting, there is a lot of travel," but Protiviti insiders don't have too many complaints about their hours: A 50- to 55-hour workweek is about average. "Working on weekends is rare," a consultant says, though "long hours are possible during on-site client visits."

Fair pay, solid benefits

Compensation is said to be “fair,” and consultants receive “an annual percentage of a bonus plan” and “good signing bonuses.” For new hires coming straight out of school, one source says, starting base pay may be “based on GPA.” Perks include “decent health care options within the first 30 days” and a starting vacation allotment of 20 days plus nine holidays. In addition, Protiviti has a 401(k) plan that offers both a traditional 401(k) and a Roth investment option; employees below the manager level are eligible for a 401(k) match, whereas manager and higher levels participate in the restricted stock program offered by Robert Half International, the firm’s parent company. Other benefits include tuition assistance (up to \$5,000 per year), reimbursement for professional certification exams with up to \$1,000 per person toward review materials, a WageWorks transit program to set aside pre-tax salary for transportation costs, and an employee assistance program that provides child and elder care access, financial planning, counseling and more. Still, one source wishes there were “better maternity leave and child care options” for working moms (and dads).

Show your stuff

A recent hire says there are plenty of opportunities to make an impression on management: “I have direct contact with my managing director, and plenty of exposure to my direct superiors,” he says. When it comes to training, options include programs for new consultants and those nearing major promotions. Staffers also have access to an online learning program that offers over 2,000 courses and a host of reference materials.

Putnam Associates

25 Burlington Mall Road
Burlington, MA 01803
Phone: (781) 273-5480
Fax: (781) 273-5484
www.putassoc.com

LOCATIONS

Burlington, MA (HQ)
London

PRACTICE AREAS

Managed Markets Access & Contracting
Organizational Strategy
Pricing Strategy
Product & Therapeutic Area Strategy

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Managing Partner: Kevin Gorman

2008 Employees: 49

2007 Employees: 45

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #1 – Work/Life Balance
- #2 – Hours in the Office
- #2 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #3 – Best Firms to Work For
- #3 – Firm Culture
- #3 (Tie) – Overall Satisfaction
- #3 – Travel Requirements
- #8 – Formal Training
- #15 – Interaction with Clients

UPPERS

- “Small-firm feel combined with the interesting nature of strategic work we do”
- “Ability to take on responsibility as soon as you are ready”
- Minimal travel requirements
- “The work/life balance is very manageable compared to other firms”

DOWNERS

- “Face time policy”
- Suburban office location can be inconvenient
- “Being confused with Putnam Investments”
- “It takes some time for changes to happen within the firm”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.putassoc.com/careers/index.html



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Very sharp people”
- “Nerdy, stiff”
- “Solid, recovering”
- “Quantitative, rough”

THE SCOOP

Here's to your health

It's no secret that health care has become one of the largest industries in the United States. American prescription drug revenue alone hit \$286.5 billion in 2007, according to industry monitor IMS Health. A better-kept secret is Putnam Associates, a consulting firm that has had great success specializing in health care. In 2005, *Consulting* magazine named Putnam one of its Seven Small Jewels. The growth of the health care industry in the U.S. has been mirrored in Putnam—from 1995 to 2005, the firm's year-to-year growth ranged from the high single digits to low double digits.

Kevin Gorman founded Putnam in 1988, anticipating that the health care industry would need more focused consulting services. Gorman told *Consulting* that “the market was calling for a focused specialty group that also brought the traditional strategy consulting disciplines.” Putnam leadership is highly focused and dedicated to the firm, with an average current tenure of 14 years.

The firm divides its health care focus into four areas: pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, diagnostics and medical devices, and it offers product strategy, portfolio management, organizational strategy and economic analysis to companies within these fields. Because it only concentrates on health care, Gorman says Putnam delivers the same breadth of services within this specialty as do larger and more well known firms. As a measure of its success, Putnam notes that the majority of its clients come through firsthand experience or referrals.

High on pharmaceuticals

The firm works with four of the top-five and nine of the top-20 global pharmaceutical companies. It not only helps with blockbuster drugs that earn billions of dollars, but also with smaller specialty drugs that may earn significantly less. The types of services rendered will also vary based on the client's need and the nature of the market. In a recent assignment, the firm was hired by a pharma client entering a crowded field of treatments for a particular infectious disease. Over the course of the project, Putnam conducted over 80 interviews with health care professionals to determine price sensitivity, product opinions and clinical outcomes.

The firm also advises three of the five most successful biotechnology companies, but is continually on the hunt for fresh young upstarts with high potential. Since new biotech companies are always scrambling for funds, they can sometimes make deals that leave them at a disadvantage. As such, Putnam helps biotech firms figure out, for example, whether to outlicense products to pharmaceutical companies, and how many rights they should give away in exchange for funding.

Making the tools to get the job done

Putnam also guides makers of diagnostic instruments, consumables, arrays, reagents, molecular tests and similar products for the medical community and clinical researchers. For one diagnostics company developing an automated system for molecular identification and analysis, Putnam had to figure out the best way to market it to laboratory researchers. It segmented the customer base, created price ranges, then benchmarked those prices against other diagnostics companies. The client went on to become a leading supplier of molecular diagnostic tests.

The firm believes that the medical device industry benefits from a great deal of “grandfathering.” That is, established technologies rule the market, and even new developments do best when in some way incorporating more mature products and technologies. For instance, one of Putnam's clients was a well-established provider of blood monitoring systems with double-digit growth and a big chunk of the market. But numbers were starting to dip, and the company decided to reorganize its sales force. Putnam helped the client learn that its market was saturated, and that it not only needed to maintain its customer base, but to begin actively grabbing customers from competitors.

GETTING HIRED

Cases, but no tricks

Putnam's hiring process for analysts and associates "typically" begins with "one or two phone interviews" or on-campus interviews, followed by an "intense" in-office round. During this "day in the office," candidates are "interviewed by about four to five analysts and associates, a senior associate, a consultant or senior consultant, and a manager or partner." There's also a lunch break in the middle with "some analysts and associates." Candidates interviewing for a more senior-level position can anticipate a similar schedule, however they will be interviewed by consultants, senior consultants, managers, senior managers and partners.

Insiders say "there are no trick questions," but "case questions are often part of interviews, particularly at the undergraduate level where there is no previous work experience to evaluate." In fact, warns a recent hire, "expect a short case in every interview." Case questions are "typically estimation cases to start—market sizing, for example," and then "further into the interview process, they become more strategy-based." Although cases are "not necessarily health care-focused," a colleague adds that interviewers will sometimes "pose a question from disguised client work and ask the candidate to break it down."

Finding friends

In addition, a partner shares that "postgrad and experienced hires" are often asked "to give a presentation to get a sense of past experience and capabilities." All candidates should also be prepared for a "resume/personal discussion," and some staffers say there is "a lot of focus on the fit of individuals with the firm culture." One senior associate qualifies that by noting, "Fit within our culture and dedication to health care become more important with the MBA candidates." That being said, an analyst adds, "younger people get an unusual amount of say in the hiring process, which is great, because it leads to classes that get along well and are friends outside of the office."

Expect some stiff competition—"due to stringent standards, many interviewees may come through before an offer is given." Putnam "espouses the slow-but-steady growth mantra that has allowed us to maintain client focus and dedication to quality," insists a senior associate. A colleague adds, "Most of our candidates come from on campus recruiting," which takes place at "most Ivies, as well as at a handful of top-tier New England schools." In all, the process "is difficult," and the firm "brings in many candidates who do not end up making the cut," so "getting an office interview by no means equals an offer." An associate advises, "There is no magic formula though—you need to be interested, smart, prepared and personable."

What's in a name?

It may also be worth keeping in mind that "there is no 'Mr. Putnam.'" Instead, the firm was "named after the street it was on," that is, "Putnam Street in Cambridge, Mass." And it's definitely worth remembering that "contrary to public perception, we are in fact different from Putnam Investments," an analyst points out.

For those who'd like a taste of what Putnam has to offer, the firm's "great internship experience" is a "good introduction to consulting." "You are treated as if you just started as an analyst, and are put on a case team right away," describes an associate, adding, "You are given the opportunity to contribute right off the bat, and your opinion is valued." An analyst agrees, "It is a great chance to get to know the tight-knit culture of the small firm." One former intern shares, "After the internship, I only interviewed at a handful of other firms since I knew that I would be happy coming back here." Putnam runs an MBA internship program in addition to the undergraduate internship program.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

All for one and one for all

Staffers are adamant that Putnam's culture is "very open," "nurturing," "collegial" and "collaborative," where "even the partners are extremely accessible and involved in daily case team operations." In fact, insiders insist that "Putnam differentiates itself through a focus on cooperation, rather than internal competition." "Everybody wants to be successful and wants to be successful together," and "everyone is there to help whenever needed, and people care about your professional development," respondents say. "People do not try to cut one another down," insists a senior associate; "rather, it is a very supportive environment fostered by open doors and open access to senior managers across the firm." "It's been great working for a company where you actually want to know your co-workers both within the work setting and on a more personal level, in a social setting," notes a recent hire.

Social but responsible

And along those lines, we're told Putnam is a "social office" since "it's a young group of people." An associate points out, "With over half of the company being in their early 20s, the office is a fun, low-key atmosphere. A big emphasis of our recruiting is on fit, and it works. We all get along really well both in and out of the office."

But at the same time, adds a junior staffer, "Putnam expects quite a bit out of its analysts and associates, and requires that its employees be able to add value to the firm." In addition, we're told "it's a firm where entrepreneurship is valued" and "where you're given every opportunity to take the reins." A longtimer reports, "The small-firm feel and collegial environment give new hires, [both] undergraduates and MBAs, an opportunity to contribute immediately and grow professionally with our set of formal and informal support networks."

No need to elbow your way up

And because the firm is "not cutthroat at all," staffers say it has "a noncompetitive approach to promotions." Putnam "is committed to growing employees from within, and many of the consultants began as analysts," says a senior associate. Others add that "all analysts are promoted to associate after one year," which "takes a lot of pressure off"—but "beyond that, everything is merit-based." The majority of respondents emphasize that "there is no up-or-out policy," although one remarks that "if you have been in a role for a while and advancement is not in the cards, they will coach you out." By and large, "the firm takes care to hire talented people who excel quickly through the ranks."

Those on a path to success "could advance to consultant from the analyst position in anywhere from three to six years." Then, a senior manager says, it takes "nine years from MBA to partner," on average. A source goes into more detail: "In general, it's one-and-a-half years post-MBA as a consultant, one-and-a-half years as a senior consultant, two years as a manger, two years as senior manager, two years as a principal and then partner." That said, we're also told there are "no quotas."

Devoted to development

Insiders insist that Putnam's "commitment to developing its employees is one of its greatest strengths." To that end, the firm offers "great formal and informal mentoring," as well as "training programs (group and individualized)," which are "used as a supplement to on-the-job coaching and personal development programs." An analyst attests, "There is a healthy mix of formal classes, where you learn the basics of health care consulting and different facets of work methods, but you are also expected to pick up new skills on the job—though you will not be expected to know them going into it." A longtimer adds, "We have a formal training program that consists of about two dozen training modules. But the real training is done on the job."

Moreover, "everyone is assigned a mentor from the get-go." A consultant states, "One of the partners is my mentor—we have frequent chats and periodically have lunch," and another notes that "some of the more senior members of the firm take time out of their day to instruct analysts, interns and associates on everything from interview skills to advanced statistical analyses."

Everyone's opinion counts

We're also told that Putnam is "receptive to internal feedback, and takes its employees' ideas and opinions seriously." One source insists that "partners are actively involved in casework, and employees will be interacting with them from the beginning." A co-worker feels that "partners tend to be removed from everyday casework, but I have worked closely with project managers from day one." In either case, it's clear there are plenty of opportunities for junior staffers to speak up. Plus, adds a senior associate, "Putnam managers rely on the younger employees to take on a great deal of responsibility, which translates to fantastic opportunities." He continues, "Less than three years out of undergrad, I have responsibilities in managing others' workstreams and interacting with high-level clients."

Go-karting with your boss

Although "management styles vary," generally "everyone is very friendly and laid-back." A senior associate shares, "I've been to case events where I raced go-karts with managers and firm partners and played golf with the managing partner. Being able to interact with managers outside of the work environment enables more meaningful relationships within the office." Furthermore, adds a source, "I can go virtually any time to my managers to get guidance on my work, talk professional development goals or just chat." Overall, says a senior associate, "managers here are some of the nicest people I've met—they will bend over backward to support those who work hard and want to succeed." "This is one of the best things about working for a small firm," remarks an associate, adding, "You get to know everyone in your company very well."

That being said, there's no requirement to engage. "It's really up to you how you want it to be with your managers," reports an analyst. "If you want to interact with your managers all the time, that's possible. If you would rather not bother them too much, there's no pressure either."

Make plans, and keep them

Perhaps most importantly, we're told that supervisors "care about your personal development and about maintaining a high quality of life." Most insiders insist that Putnam's "work/life balance is excellent compared to most other consulting firms," and that "Putnam is committed to fostering a strong work/life balance, and respects employees' personal and vacation time." Managers "try to make sure morale is high and no one is overworked." A partner explains, "Our goal is to retain people long term, and we believe a manageable work/life balance is critical to doing that." "I have no problem meeting up with my friends, even on weekdays," an analyst happily reports, noting that "vacation times are always honored, as long as the request is filed in time." A more experienced staffer agrees that "you can actually take" vacation at Putnam, whereas, "at my previous firm, I had to cancel every vacation I scheduled; it came to a point where I wouldn't even bother." "Managers delegate tasks keeping in mind that people have outside priorities," agrees a colleague, adding, "I like it that I can make dinner reservations or plan a weekend trip without worrying about canceling due to work obligations."

Got it good

Along those lines, we're told that "typical workweeks are around 50 hours" at Putnam, while "the busiest weeks may push 60 to 70." As one analyst reports, "On the whole, most of us will work 45 to 50 hours a week, with several 60-hour weeks sprinkled throughout the year." A senior associate says these hours are "generally manageable, with a couple evenings in the office or a couple hours of work on the weekend," while another reports, "Once you have left the office, your time is your own. Although late nights will occur, weekend work is rare." One associate moans, "I think partners could do a better job of evening out work between cases that are especially demanding and those that are not," but a colleague opines, "For a consulting firm of this caliber, the hours are very strong." A recent hire agrees, "There are definitely times when you have to work long hours, but compared to friends I have at other consulting firms, we have it good at Putnam."

Another analyst says it helps that "upper-level management is very good at letting you know beforehand when the inevitable rough week is coming up." As a result, "surprise late nights are very uncommon." Plus, "when weekend work is necessary" it is "typically done remotely from home." It's also not unusual to spend a few weeks not assigned to a client, since "case volume

naturally fluctuates,” and we’re told that “when you are on the beach, the hours are even more flexible.” Still, one analyst notes, “The only complaint is that even when I don’t have work to do, I feel as though I can’t leave before 6 p.m.” Others agree, with some frustration, that there is an “unwritten policy that employees must come in to the office even when unstaffed for weeks.” The company itself insists, however, that employees are not always expected to be in the office during standard hours.

Tame travel

Staffers appreciate that “travel is kept at a minimum,” which “allows a life outside of work and contributes a lot to the work/life balance.” “I’m home to have dinner with my wife virtually every night,” reports a recent hire. A senior associate explains, “Work is never done at the client site; travel is limited to presentations and client meetings or workshops.” Plus, “first-year analysts don’t travel at all.” “Travel does not become common until reaching the senior associate level (typically two to three years postundergrad),” sources explain, and “even then, travel is limited to several trips a month.” In addition, “many clients are in the Northeast, so day trips are more common than overnight stays.”

Most respondents feel that the travel requirements are “just the right amount, so you look forward to client interaction, rather than regret the amount of time you are away from home and family.” An analyst adds that while “the idea of traveling sounds exciting to a lot of people,” the reality is that “when it comes to getting settled in a new city, making connections and getting involved in regular activities, the less travel, the better.” “I absolutely love that I don’t have to travel,” raves a junior source. “It’s rather nice living in the apartment I pay for.” And while “you won’t feel like a valuable customer when you do go to the airport,” it’s also the case that “more work hours are dedicated to work, not travel hassles.” “Believe me,” advises a longtimer, “business travel is not glamorous.”

In one caveat, a few staffers mention that the “lack of travel means lack of client contact,” especially at the junior level. Then again, remarks an analyst, “I don’t interact with the top brass at the client, but why would I? I’m perfectly content with letting the managers and consultants do the talking in high-level conference calls and meetings.”

Benefits (and drawbacks) of promoting from within

Some staffers say the good life continues when it comes to salaries. A partner boasts that the firm offers “very favorable compensation combined with favorable work/life balance (by industry standards).” But others are less enthusiastic, claiming that “comparing apples to apples, our compensation is competitive but not at the top of the charts.” A senior associate remarks, “I feel the firm loses a bit of its competitive edge in terms of compensation as consultants move up the ranks—likely due to the fact that the firm has had a long history of growing individuals within the firm rather than hiring from outside.” A colleague claims, however, that “the opportunity for advancement is high, which means that after a few years you might be far better off at Putnam (from a financial standpoint) than if you were stuck in a large firm with a slower promotion track.” And an executive insists that “salaries and bonuses [were] made much more competitive in 2007 and forward, especially for senior staff.” Putnam also offers a “401(k) match up to 5 percent,” and is a “50 percent sponsor of the health/dental plan.”

Go Red Sox!

In another highlight, “after every case is finished, the analysts and associates choose something fun for the case team to do together. You can choose to do a Boston activity (e.g., Celtics game, skydiving, F1 racing, paintballing) or go to a fancy restaurant downtown or in the suburbs.” An “annual golf outing and bowling events” are added bonuses, as are “monthly wine and cheese social events,” which “encourage everyone to get out of their offices on a Friday afternoon to socialize.” Incoming hires to the Boston office beware: Putnam staffers are passionate about baseball, and many say the biggest firm perk is “season tickets to the Red Sox, which are shared.”

A few respondents claim Putnam’s perks are “nothing too fancy” and complain, “Seeing the kinds of perks that competitors give to their employees, we fall short.” But as one analyst sees it, “some firms have more perks, but the reality is that those things tend to come at a cost, whether it is longer hours, more travel or an unpredictable work schedule.”

Sick of suburbia

Staffers do, however, tend to agree that the office location in the suburbs is less than ideal. We're told that "the location is a hassle," not only for the "30-minute drive," but also for "the crunch on my wallet," given gas prices these days. Still, it helps that the journey is "a reverse commute" and that "the office space itself is great and was recently remodeled." Consultants say "the fact that more junior staff have the opportunity to have an office is a nice perk." And although the area "isn't as exciting as working downtown would be," the location "offers all the amenities you'd need (shopping, lunch spots, etc.)."

Making an effort with diversity

Reviews of diversity at Putnam are also less than stellar. Although some say the firm is "very open to women at all levels," one female staffer feels that "upper management is completely male-dominated," and another agrees, "As a woman, I feel very comfortable and integrated in the firm, but resent that there are no upper-management women." A colleague echoes, "For one reason or another, women do not hold any senior positions in the office, and I do not think that they have in awhile." That being said, others note that the firm does have "a lot of women at the analyst and associate level." In addition, an insider insists that "Putnam continues to make a concerted effort to attract women." As evidence, the firm points out that it has one woman who is a manager, and two upper-level women arriving in mid-2008, one who will be a consultant and another who will be a senior associate consultant.

Similarly, we're told that "minorities are not well represented at the firm—especially above the analyst level," but a senior associate notes that "the firm is making a concerted effort to improve diversity in the office."

Somewhat involved

Praise is also muted with regard to Putnam's charitable efforts. "We are encouraged to donate to certain charities and efforts," says one new hire, "but I'd like to see some more hands-on community service with the firm." Others agree that Putnam's involvement is "not nearly enough" and that, usually, "charity events are organized by individuals, not the firm." Overall, says a partner, the firm "encourages employee-driven activities, such as the Corporate Challenge, breast cancer walks, etc." However, Putnam does have "a holiday donation matching program for several Boston-area charities." One senior associate reports, "Many of my colleagues are involved with charities, and there are frequent e-mails that circle the office encouraging participation." Plus, adds a source, "I am chairing a committee to run a health care panel in Boston in the fall."

Quintiles Consulting

P.O. Box 13979
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Phone: (919) 998-2000
Fax: (919) 998-2094
www.quintiles.com/consulting

LOCATIONS

Research Triangle Park, NC (HQ)

Boston, MA
New York, NY
Rockville, MD
Amsterdam
London

Parent company maintains offices in more than 50 countries

PRACTICE AREAS

Market Access
Product Development & Commercialization
Regulatory & Quality

THE STATS

Employer Type: Division of Quintiles Transnational Corp., a Private Company

Chairman & CEO: Dennis Gillings

Division President: Jay Norman

2008 Employees: 20,000 (includes Quintiles Transnational)

UPPER

- Able to leverage the resources of the parent company

DOWNER

- Name recognition is limited by sector expertise

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Brooke Haddock, Global Staffing Partner
Phone: (913) 708-6051

www.qtrn.com/careers

THE SCOOP

Taking care of medicine

Quintiles Consulting, a division of global pharmaceutical services company Quintiles Transnational Corp., works with life sciences companies to maximize potential and minimize risk through expert strategic, operational and technical advice. It leverages knowledge of clinical development and regulatory and commercialization processes to swiftly transition products from discovery to development to market. These capabilities are clearly reflected in its practice areas, which include product development and commercialization, regulatory and quality, and market access. Quintiles Consulting is also able to utilize the expertise of its parent, which has assisted with the development or marketing of all of the world's 30 best-selling drugs.

At the start

Quintiles Transnational was founded in 1982 by Dennis Gillings, then a professor of biostatistics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The seed for the firm was a 1974 contract between Gillings and a European multinational pharmaceutical company to help it with product analysis. Gillings and a part-time staff took on more and more clients until Quintiles was finally incorporated in North Carolina. The name came from an abbreviation of Quantitative Information in the Life and Environmental Sciences.

A new direction

Quintiles is investing in the expansion of its consulting business to better serve clients as they face increasingly complex regulatory, development and market challenges. With the aim of becoming the premier life sciences industry consultancy, Quintiles Consulting is quickly evolving from its traditional regulatory practice to a strategic management consulting firm, recruiting top industry talent and deepening its expertise through targeted acquisitions. Quintiles Consulting was originally founded in 1998, and its services then focused on regulatory and quality systems compliance. That practice, with its roster of former FDA and EU regulatory officials and industry veterans, continues to be an important part of the expanded organization.

Make it, prove it, sell it

Quintiles Consulting's product development and commercialization practice assists companies from discovery through the entire life cycle. At the start of a drug or life science company's efforts—when the product is first coming into being—the firm advises clients on early decisions of out-licensing or in-licensing, effective partnership creation, portfolio analysis and clinical optimization. The group also applies its expertise to help streamline development times, manufacturing and commercialization through data-driven process optimization strategies. As the product progresses through development stages, the regulatory and quality practice comes into play, helping a client tackle regulatory compliance, as well as proper research, testing and scale-up to manufacturing. Clients in this practice can opt for such services as mock FDA inspections, inspection readiness training, facility commissioning, validation, quality systems implementation and corrective action plans in the event of quality systems or compliance problems. The market access practice works with clients to prepare for commercialization as early as Phase II, by helping them define the target “value story” for their product, identifying the evidence needed to be successful in the market and, further down the line, identifying the right pricing and reimbursement strategy to achieve success. The practice uses market research, health economics, outcomes research and epidemiologic investigations, among other tools, to inform and execute its strategic recommendations.

Helping clients help themselves

As an additional offering of its regulatory and quality practice, Quintiles Consulting provides a variety of training programs designed to teach organizations best practices, keep them up to date on regulatory requirements and shore up their understanding of complex validation issues, such as document preparation, plan development and international guidelines. These programs are

customized by client type and need, and can be applied through all segments of an organization, from top management down through facilities and maintenance. Some past courses have included test method validation, quality systems management with executive responsibility, developing a PMA/510k (pre-marketing filings) and FDA readiness.

Welcoming the new

Quintiles Consulting made a number of key personnel additions in 2007 and 2008. In April 2008, three new practice leaders came on, all of them consulting industry vets—John Doyle, leading market access for U.S. operations, Adrian K. McKemey, heading up product development and commercialization for U.S. operations, and Jim Featherstone, in charge of regulatory and quality and product development and commercialization for European operations. With the goal of building the business globally and expanding the group's service offerings, Doyle will work closely with Dr. Jacco Keja, who came onboard in mid-2007 to lead the European operations for the market access practice. Globalization has become a vital focus for Quintiles; Matthew Eberhart, who joined the firm in April 2008 as vice president of business development, is responsible for establishing a global business development framework and coordinating business development efforts between the U.S. and the broader Quintiles organization. October 2007 saw the appointment of Jay Norman as president. Norman came to Quintiles from Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, where he stood as chief operating officer and president. In 2006, he was ranked as one of the top-25 consultants of the year by *Consulting* magazine.

The firm has also enjoyed some recent growth on a larger scale, through the May 2008 acquisition of Eidetics, a Boston-based decision analytics and market research consulting firm. Quintiles was attracted to Eidetics's track record of advising 18 of the top-20 pharmaceutical companies. Additionally, the purchase will enhance the capabilities of its product development and commercialization and market access practices.

GETTING HIRED

Pick a position, or not

To find consulting opportunities at Quintiles, job seekers can log onto the careers section of the firm's web site to search open positions by keyword, title or location, and apply online. Candidates are encouraged to create a full profile on the site in order to be considered for future openings—according to the firm, recruiters will “match you to job opportunities as they become available.” Quintiles Consulting is currently building out its new practices and, as such, is aggressively seeking individuals with management consulting or specialized life science consulting experience.

Beyond its online recruiting activities, the firm sets up booths at a handful of professional career fairs and universities each year. An annual recruiting calendar is available on the web site.

Questions and values

After the resume drop and review, the next step is a first round of interviews. The firm says these preliminary Q&A sessions typically last “less than an hour” and are conducted over the phone; in the first round, recruiters will be curious about candidates' past work experience, specific skills and knowledge as they relate to the role, motivation for seeking an opportunity with Quintiles Consulting and future career goals.

Those who do well in the first interview will then meet with a practice lead via telephone to determine suitability for the position. Finally, those who are most qualified are invited on site to meet with the leadership team for an in-depth round of interviews; they will be asked to present a writing sample, along with a formal presentation. According to the firm, these on-site sessions “give you the chance to get a feel for the culture and work environment here at Quintiles—and let us see if you are a fit to the organization.” In the second round, each candidate meets with multiple management-level interviewers, who will be looking for both cultural fit and work experience. The firm advises, “You may also be asked questions around Quintiles values: customer service, teamwork, integrity, quality and leadership. Have a list of questions ready for your interviews.”

The Segal Company

One Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016
Phone: (212) 251-5000
Fax: (212) 251-5490
www.segalco.com
www.segaladvisors.com
www.segalmgc.com
www.sibson.com
www.segalco.ca

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

20 locations around the United States and Canada

PRACTICE AREAS

Benefits, Compensation & HR Consulting
Communications Consulting
Investment Consulting
Strategic HR Consulting

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
President & CEO: Joseph A. LoCicero
2008 Employees: 900 +
2007 Employees: 900 +
2007 Revenue: \$184 million
2006 Revenue: \$180 million

UPPER

- Credit goes where credit is due

DOWNER

- Building career momentum can be slow

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.segalco.com/careers/index.html

THE SCOOP

Flock of Segals

Founded in 1939, The Segal Company focuses on benefits and HR consulting and actuarial services for a wide variety of employers and plan sponsors. It is a union of practices (which all fall under the umbrella of The Segal Group, Inc.) offering services in three major markets: corporate and nonprofit, government (local, state and federal) and multiemployer plans. It also works with professional services firms and has a significant presence in the higher education field. Having been one of the original players in employee benefits consulting, the firm claims to be behind many practices that are now considered standard, such as supplemental benefits programs and preferred provider organizations (PPOs). It advises benefits programs that cover over eight million workers in the U.S. and Canada; the number of employees at each Segal client can run from hundreds to hundreds of thousands. As might seem natural for a firm that concentrates on improving the lives of workers at other companies, Segal is privately owned by its employees.

Some of the main methods the firm uses to ensure quality are a team approach, peer review, annual client satisfaction surveys, national professional standards and training, and companywide education about quality control. The firm emphasizes that it does not want to provide services that clients already perform for themselves. Segal also publishes a number of newsletters and reports, many of which are tailored for specific locations and markets.

Practices make perfect

The corporate and nonprofit sides of the firm's consulting services are handled by Sibson Consulting. The group aims to help organizations get the highest possible returns on their investments in human capital. It has provided services to over 50 percent of the Fortune 500. Sibson focuses on employee benefits, organization and talent, performance and rewards, sales force effectiveness and technology. It also provides HR and benefits consulting for institutions of higher education. Segal acquired Sibson from Nextera Enterprises in 2002 for \$16 million. Sibson Consulting, as it exists today, was created from a blending of Sibson's human capital consulting division with Segal's corporate benefits and actuarial practice in February 2007. Originally known as Sibson & Company, this division has over 40 years of consulting experience.

Investment consulting services are handled through Segal Advisors, Inc., an SEC-registered affiliate of Segal established in 1969. Segal Advisors now provides services for over 230 clients, with more than \$81 billion in assets. Its clients receive services such as investment policy guidelines and objectives, assistance in revising or setting asset allocation parameters, DC-Connect (a specially-constructed process for choosing vendors and implementing defined contribution plans) and DC-Assessment (a review of investments combined with analysis from Sibson Consulting). In 2006, *Pensions & Investments* declared Segal Advisors one of its top-25 consulting firms.

Segal/MGC Communications offers communications services for benefits, HR and organizational purposes, providing strategic and tactical advice, training, education, marketing and research. This arm was created by combining Segal's own National Segal Communications practice with Marjorie Gross & Co., which was acquired by Segal in 2001. Some of Segal/MGC's specialties include compensation, organizational effectiveness, annual enrollment, ERISA compliance, and health, welfare and retirement benefits. It is geared toward helping organizations make sure participants are educated and connected. Clients have included BMW, L-3 Communications, OfficeMax, NJ Transit, the city of Chicago and the American Lung Association.

As for multiemployer benefits plans and public-sector plans, Segal helps with strategic planning, participant communications services, defined benefit plans, health benefits programs, long-term care programs, work/life initiatives and VEBA consulting. It also helps clients comply with the Pension Protection Act of 2006.

New alliances and offices

Segal has undergone a number of recent strategic expansions. In April 2007, it announced an agreement with CareAdvantage, an independent medical data management company, to help in breaking down and analyzing the numerous complexities of health

care plans. In May 2008, Sibson Consulting announced a strategic alliance with Morneau Sobeco, a leader in employee benefits administration outsourcing solutions. The two companies will collaborate on offering benefits outsourcing services to Sibson clients, and employee benefits and HR consulting services to Morneau Sobeco clients in the U.S. Then, in June 2008, Sibson announced the opening of a Montreal office—Conseillers Sibson—to complement its expanded HR and benefits consulting business in Canada. Also in June 2008, Segal announced an agreement with Benefits Informatics to expand electronic claims audit capabilities for clients. Benefit Informatics is a health care technology company that provides application services to organizations administering and servicing employee benefits plans.

GETTING HIRED

In search of champions

Segal's careers page features a letter from President and CEO Joseph LoCicero that reveals (in broad strokes) some of what the firm looks for in an applicant. Value is placed on individuals who are "achievers, professionals, critical thinkers, communicators, collaborators and problem solvers," as well as "client champions." There is also an emphasis on the need for those who "fit" and "belong," since the Segal work culture is highly collaborative. "Employees are on a first-name basis with one another," LoCicero writes, "and we all work with 'open doors.'"

Another section of the careers page allows visitors to browse the firm's current job openings, categorized by level of experience—including internships, entry-level and experienced professionals. Clicking on one of these categories will lead to a list of openings identified by title and location. Job seekers can also read descriptions of Segal's employee benefits, most of which stick to the familiar package of vacation, health insurance and pension plan, with some interesting additions such as profit sharing, tuition reimbursement and health club membership reimbursement.

Simon-Kucher & Partners

One Canal Park
Cambridge, MA 02141
Phone: (617) 231-4500
Fax: (617) 576-2751
www.simon-kucher.com

LOCATIONS

Boston, MA (US HQ)

Bonn (World HQ)

New York, NY • San Francisco, CA • Cologne • Frankfurt •
London • Luxembourg • Madrid • Milan • Moscow • Munich
• Paris • Tokyo • Vienna • Warsaw • Zurich

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Strategy
Marketing & Sales
Mergers & Acquisitions
Setting & Managing Prices

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Chairman & CEO: Hermann Simon
2007 Employees: 400
2006 Employees: 365
2007 Revenue: \$120 million
2006 Revenue: \$80 million

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#12 – Travel Requirements
#18 – Firm Culture
#18 – Relationships with Supervisors

Diversity

#7 – Diversity for GLBT
#19 – Best Firms for Diversity

UPPERS

- “For a consulting firm, work/life balance is great for entry-level consultants”
- Annual all-expenses-paid holiday party in Germany
- “Partners and project managers actively engage team members in problem solving”
- “Lots of freedom”

DOWNERS

- “Lower than average pay”
- Very few women at the partner level
- “Not much administrative support”
- “Über cost-consciousness”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Attn: Recruiting Team
One Canal Park
Cambridge, MA 02141
E-mail: recruit-usa@simon-kucher.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- “Best in pricing consulting”
- “Less competitive salary”
- “Relaxed”
- “Very narrow focus”

THE SCOOP

By the numbers

Simon-Kucher & Partners is a global consulting firm focused on strategy, marketing and pricing. It carries expertise in an array of industries, including energy, banking, health care, insurance, media, telecom and software, and others. Most of its clients—among them Warner Music, Nokia, SAP, General Motors, Goldman Sachs, T-Mobile, Microsoft and Bayer—hail from the Fortune 500.

The firm was founded in 1985 in Bonn, Germany, by business professor Hermann Simon and two of his formal doctoral students. The trio believed its statistical research and analysis was not limited to mere scholarship, but could also be applied as a business service. This numbers-centric approach is still alive and kicking to this day; the company explicitly states that it is not a general strategy shop, and does not take on projects, such as cost-cutting or restructuring, that require skills outside of its specialized purview.

Unfolding the map

The boundaries of SKP's territory, on the other hand, are wide open. The firm employs over 400 consultants in 17 offices across 12 countries. And following record 25 percent revenue growth in 2007—up to \$120 million from \$80 million in 2006—it opened new locations in Moscow, Madrid and Luxembourg in 2008. These were added to the list of locations opened a year earlier, in New York, Cologne and Vienna. SKP has never had a year-over-year decline in revenue, which is partly due to the counter-cyclical demand for strategy and marketing services in difficult business cycles.

The company also awarded four partner promotions from within its own ranks in January 2008: Jens Baumgarten, who directs the financial services practice in New York; Dr. Fabian Braun, heading the chemicals and construction division in Cologne; André Weber, who will run the travel, transport and telecom division in Boston; and Dr. Gerald Schnell, selected for the life sciences division in the new Luxemburg facility.

SKP is now 10 times larger than it was a decade ago, but not all expansion is intended, welcomed or even truthful. In a bizarre case that surpasses identity theft, going all the way to brand and reputation theft, in late 2007, SKP discovered a consultancy in China operating under the Simon-Kucher name, displaying the company logo and claiming to be a regional branch. The company is now taking steps to expose the imposter entity.

That famed German efficiency

Math has no feelings, numbers don't make friends. So it follows that Simon-Kucher, a company that believes in always doing the math and watching the numbers, is more interested in business relationships than in personal ones. The firm notes that it works with clients on a meritocratic basis, earning business based on its work product and knowledge in specific areas, not by wining and dining clients. In the company's view, new assignments, whether from new or existing clients, are the offspring of former results. Former results like over 1,100 pricing projects in the last three years, shaping the pricing strategy for four of the world's 10 best-selling drugs and developing pricing recommendations for more than 80 of the global Fortune 500 companies. SKP claims its price management increases return on sales by an average of 1 to 2 percent. An August 2007 study by German periodical *Manager Magazine* ranked the firm No. 1 among the marketing and sales consultancies. Who needs friends and feelings when you have all that?

Simon says, "profit"

SKP's business philosophy is pure pedigree. Its founder, renowned pricing expert Dr. Hermann Simon, was once named the second most influential management thinker in German-speaking countries. He is also a distinguished scholar, having held visiting professor posts at London Business School, Stanford, MIT, Harvard, the Universities of Mainz and Bielefeld in Germany,

INSEAD in France and Keio University in Japan. Simon is the author of more than 30 books in 15 languages, most recently 2007's *Hidden Champions of the 21st Century*, which updates ideas first presented a decade earlier in his original best seller, *Hidden Champions: Lessons from 500 of the World's Best Unknown Companies*. The book celebrates smaller companies that focus on a niche market, are willing to venture into global markets and are often privately owned—all factors that allow them to maximize profits ahead of market share.

Developing talent

Logic dictates (and SKP is nothing if not logical) that a company bent on commercializing expert advice must have knowledgeable and well-trained employees. Along those lines, its consultants are expected to contribute to global thought. To that end, Simon-Kucher designed SKP University, STEPS and a knowledge database.

SKP University is a systematic program of lectures and individual presentations on specific strategy and marketing topics led by both internal and external sources. The program also features seminars on rhetoric. STEPS, or Strategic Training for Employees' Professional Success, is a quarterly training session designed to get new employees' feet wet and expose them to the company's typical procedures and analytical methods. Simulated projects are completed over the course of one week. And, serving as a massive crib sheet of business concepts, the knowledge database is an electronic collection of data from recent or upcoming conferences, featuring all documents, manuals and other tools of information used on the presented subject. Older data are kept in hard copy in the firm's library.

GETTING HIRED

The price is right

Insiders say the hiring process at SKP is "rigorous," but also "realistic and down-to-earth"—as one recent hire quips, there are "no stupid mind games." The firm is "very focused on matching a person to the right job level."

The firm maintains a heavy recruiting schedule "at all the top schools" through which it finds "about half" of its hires. A senior consultant explains, "We generally do one round of on-campus interviews and then bring candidates in for a full day of final interviews." Other applicants generally start with "two phone interviews," and then an "in-office final round." All qualified candidates encounter a "short math test (think GMAT math)," which is "followed by multiple cases and fit interviews with five or six staff members at all levels." "Most of our case questions," describes a newbie, "are directly or indirectly related to price, pricing or things on the revenue side of life. After all, that's what we do." Another warns, "If your resume claims foreign language fluency, there is a good chance you will be tested on it during interviews (especially European languages)."

Summer internships are a good way to get to know what life at SKP is like. A junior source says his experience "prompted [him] to come back full time." A colleague notes that interns "work on a combination of client projects and internal initiatives, often related to business development. Supervisors try hard to give interns the experience of seeing a project from start to finish."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

The buzz

Staffers are full of positive buzzwords about the SKP culture: "collaborative, energetic, stimulating, insightful," says one, and a co-worker throws out adjectives like "nonhierarchical, merit-based, friendly and open to new ideas." A third describes the firm as "honest, efficient, entrepreneurial and no-nonsense." "It is one of the hidden gems of the strategy consulting industry," raves a senior source, adding that while its name recognition may be lower than that of other firms, it "provides very good professional development and quality of life."

We're all family

Respondents also say SKP is a “place where one can find good friends.” A staffer reports, “People are always ready to help colleagues with their work” and to “teach each other new things.” Some say it’s even like a family—“SKP has somehow managed to nurture a family-like corporate culture.” “I get the sense that I am taken care of every day, and there is a genuine concern in my development as a person, not just as an analyst. The people I work with challenge each other to grow and think in an environment free of arrogance or cutthroat competition.” The “fun social activities” are a morale-booster as well, including “happy hours, office potluck lunches, ski weekends and a full weekend holiday party in Germany.”

A Massachusetts-based consultant comments, “Our firm does a great job of striving to invest in its employees. Simon-Kucher stresses the importance of sharing knowledge and helping each employee learn, grow and gain experience that will create better products for our clients, both in the short and long term.” A colleague agrees, “SKP has a very enjoyable office culture, stemming from three main things: good people, sensible travel requirements, and a relaxed group of directors and partners that do not emphasize hierarchy.”

A world that's flat

Indeed, many insiders cite the “flat structure and open-door policy” as distinctive features of the firm. A junior source in Boston notes, “What I like about SKP is that you have direct contact with the partners from the moment you join the firm.” “For example,” he continues, “during lunch, partners, directors and consultants all gather in our main conference room and talk about virtually everything—from the latest sports news, politics and movies, to developing a complicated rating system for the local eateries.” Another recent hire adds, “Supervisors are very open and act more like peers than managers. They have nailed down how to ask more junior employees to do things for them in such a way that makes the junior employee feel needed and not like he/she is simply following orders.” “My managers have been excellent in understanding that this is my first job out of college and are very supportive,” a co-worker shares. “They give me large responsibilities but understand my current level of experience. Their doors are always open for questions and they are more than willing to teach me all I want to know.”

Plenty of personal time

In keeping with the friendly atmosphere, a consultant in Cambridge reports that “people hang out after work about once a week,” adding that, “while people make friends within SKP, the positive work/life balance means that most SKP people are able to maintain friendships and relationships with nonconsultants as well.” Most staffers agree that a “work/life balance is a large priority for our company” and that “maintaining a work/life balance is definitely manageable at SKP, compared to other firms.” A source in California comments, “One is given independence and responsibility, so it depends on the employee to get the work done and enjoy life.” A director in Cambridge adds, “If I leave at 6 p.m., I’ll still need to check and respond to e-mails later from home, but I prefer that to staying longer in the office.”

We’re also told that “weekend work is rare”—one respondent notes that “the weekly newsletter from the chairman in Bonn always encourages everyone in the company to enjoy a relaxing weekend.” “I was actually forbidden to dial in to a meeting when on vacation,” a consultant pipes in.

Growing pains

However, some warn that the tide is beginning to turn, due to “strong growth.” An insider explains, “Work/life balance has already changed significantly in only a few years. As the company grows, work hours will be more comparable to other consulting firm hours.” A staffer on the East Coast seems OK with this shift: “I personally like most of the people I work with and would consider them friends,” adding, “This comes in handy when you are working at 3 a.m. in the lobby of the hotel for a presentation in five hours. If you don’t like your co-workers, you literally have nothing else.” Others have started to sense the negative effects on their work/life balance. A senior consultant laments, “I’ve had to work Christmas and New Years for the last two years in a row, and there really isn’t a 1:1 comp time rate for holidays and weekends worked.”

No need for a mileage account

That said, most consultants happily report spending limited time in hotels. That's a good thing, since travel at SKP "is very low budget"—that is, "always coach no matter where you're flying" and rooms at Marriott Courtyards-caliber establishments (the horror!). An insider explains, "Most of our work can be done from our office, so travel is low." A director adds, "As a consultant, you travel a couple of days every month, on average, although directors and partners travel more than that." "The focused nature of our work, compared to other firms that claim to do everything, allows us to deliver top-quality advice without having to bring the sleeping bag," a partner explains. Most new hires report limited travel demands; one source attests, "I have been gone a total of five nights in nine months." One contact states, "I had the most travel-intensive case of the new hires in my class, and even that only involved a total of five weeks of travel over a six-month period."

No foosball here

Given that most respondents work from their SKP home office, it's handy that the "clean and cheerful" facilities are "very conveniently located, with lots of space and light." All "the necessary conveniences" are provided, although luxuries don't seem to be: "We don't have a pool table or a café or anything like that," says one senior consultant, adding, "We floated the idea of having a foosball table to the managing partner, and that was shot down completely."

Without the distraction of games, consultants are able to focus more on their work, and in Boston, at least, it seems they're given the amenities to do so. A staffer there comments, "Many individuals have single offices, which gives them privacy and a quiet environment to focus on their work." "Typically, anyone who has been at the firm for three years is guaranteed his or her own office," a colleague interjects.

The consequences of being grounded

Lighter schedules and less travel seem to have their price—or lack thereof. Staffers generally say their salaries are lower than they'd like, though they claim to be content overall. "Although the absolute amount of compensation may be low compared to other consulting firms, the minimal travel requirements and reasonable in-office hours balance it out," comments one staffer. Another concurs, "Though we may get paid less than employees at some other consulting companies, we seem to definitely work fewer hours than they do. I prefer to work much less and get paid a bit less, which is what SKP offers."

Still, a cohort retorts, "SKP says that we receive less salary because we work fewer hours. I understand receiving less base salary, but the bonus structure could be improved to better reflect performance and better fit industry norms." Generally, we're told that nonsalary forms of compensation are fairly limited, and include "2 or 3 percent matching for 401(k)," "profit sharing for partners only" and a "very small relocation bonus/assistance when transferring offices."

A bash in Bonn

That's not to say there aren't other perks, the best of which is "the annual world meeting and holiday party that includes significant others," and is paid for by the firm. "It is an event not to be missed," claims one staffer, "held in a castle overlooking the Rhine in Germany." A recent college grad (who's presumably been to many a party) adds, "This was one of the best parties I've ever been to." Less glamorous, but also not to be missed, are "free fruit, drinks and yogurt in the office kitchen" in Boston, as well as "free garage parking" and a "company car for directors and senior consultants."

Take initiative on training

Also held in Germany is a weeklong initial training for new hires, but beyond that, training at SKP is described as "hit or miss." "Most training is unofficial and on the job," and some respondents believe that "sometimes our training could be more systematic and intentional." A partner explains, "Shortly after someone joins, they spend a week with colleagues from around the world in training," adding that "Boston also runs a weeklong industry and advanced training program for new hires." A source adds that "each new hire is assigned a mentor who functions as a reference point for any questions or concerns." There are also "regular

lectures and ‘SKP universities,’ during which SKP employees share insights and expertise they have gathered from previous work/cases.” But otherwise, an insider advises, “You really need to take initiative, find the person who knows how to do what you need and learn with some guidance.” Although some may view this as a lack of structure, a source comments that it is actually “in line with the individualistic culture here.”

Go your own way or go global

It’s also up to individuals to set their own career path. There’s no mad scramble to climb the ladder because “there is no up-or-out policy, and those who are happy with their level are more than welcome to stay there.” By the same token, high achievers are able to advance rapidly. A San Francisco-based staffer reports, “SKP recognizes the potential of its employees and grooms them to succeed. It is a complete meritocracy, and each person climbs according to his skills and ambitions.” “Performance reviews are held every six months,” and “consultants get promoted once a year, on average.” But “if you are good at what you do and demonstrate ability to be self-sufficient and responsible, you can be promoted every six months.” According to the firm, multiple undergraduate hires have been promoted from consultant to senior consultant to director (the step below partnership) within four years.

For those seeking a more global experience, “international rotations” are a good option. A partner explains, “High-potential individuals are able to apply for three- to six-month rotations in foreign offices. They may take advantage of this sometimes after only one year with the firm and receive ex-pat benefits, plus the opportunity to learn how to work with people in other cultures.”

A melting pot

There’s plenty of diversity within U.S. offices as well. “What I love about SKP,” says one consultant, “is just how accepting the culture is of different personalities, backgrounds, etc.” Adds another, “We are super-diverse in terms of the number of ethnicities and nationalities represented by our consultants and directors. Our head partner is Hispanic, and we have many languages and cultures represented in our ranks.” A source in Boston describes his office as “a total melting pot, with employees coming from countries as diverse as Germany, Switzerland, Spain, India and Korea.”

Adding to that pot, we’re told that “one half of the current directors are women,” and “there are plenty of women in middle and senior management positions.” That said, an insider mentions that “there is only one female partner among a total of roughly 35.” “An internal seminar has been organized to discuss this issue and to understand how more women can move up the ranks.”

In addition, respondents say the firm is “very gay-friendly” and has “many openly gay employees, including one partner.” One out staffer comments, “SKP is about as accepting as it comes for GLBT employees,” and adds, “I have never felt the need to bite my tongue about being gay, due to the open culture here. Other firms get high marks for having GLBT organizations, clubs or support groups; SKP does not have one because there is no need for one—our culture is 100 percent accepting.”

A day for donations

SKP also makes a decent effort to reach out to the community, largely through an “annual community service day,” when “the office is closed and we volunteer as a group (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, soup kitchens, etc.).” There are also “employee-driven efforts to participate in food drives and events for various charitable causes,” as well as “company teams for various races and walk-a-thons.” Staffers are also given “flexibility with outside service projects.” Supported projects include the Walk for Hunger, the PanMass Challenge and the JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge.

Stern Stewart & Co.

111 Broadway, Suite 1402
New York, NY 10006
Phone: (212) 261-0600
Fax: (212) 581-6420
www.sternstewart.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

Johannesburg
London
Melbourne
Mumbai
Munich
São Paulo
Singapore

PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate Finance Advisory
Incentive Compensation
Organizational Development
Value Based Management

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Chairman & CEO: Joel M. Stern

UPPER

- Strong niche position in financial consulting

DOWNER

- Lacks notoriety in the US

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.sternstewart.com/ny/career

E-mail: careers@sternstewart.com



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Brilliant at finance"
- "One-trick pony"
- "Nice guys"
- "Outdated"

THE SCOOP

The virtue of value

The advice that Stern Stewart & Co. gives to clients is almost entirely built around one theme: EVA (economic value added). EVA is a term that gets thrown around by a lot of people these days, but it all began at Stern Stewart. Let's be very clear—if you don't believe in EVA, then this is not the firm for you. If you do, you won't be alone. Hundreds of companies have adopted Stern Stewart's EVA methods, including Best Buy, Briggs & Stratton, Coca-Cola, Goldman Sachs, Herman Miller, SPX, Siemens, the U.S. Postal Service and the Williams Companies. The firm likes to stick with these clients for the long haul too—it believes that six months to three years might be necessary to fully internalize its methods.

Chicago-style, deep-dish EVA

CEO Joel Stern says the origins of EVA came from his time at the University of Chicago, when he began to feel that the reigning model of EPS (earnings per share) was inadequate for determining the true value of companies. After graduating, Stern spent 18 years at Chase Manhattan Bank, where he helped create the concept of “free cash flow,” and continued working on the ideas that would become EVA. In 1982, he decided that the time was right and teamed up with G. Bennett Stewart, also an EVA believer and alumnus of the University of Chicago, to form Stern Stewart. The two men spent the next decade refining and promoting the ideas of EVA, which culminated in Stewart's groundbreaking 1991 book on the subject, *The Quest for Value: The EVA Management Guide*. Although Stewart's book remains the core EVA text, it can be a pretty dense read, so the firm has also published a variety of other books that simplify or modify the method, such as 1998's *EVA: The Real Key to Creating Wealth*, by consultant Al Ehrbar.

So how does it work?

The firm's EVA method seeks to determine the real profit of a company, as seen from the perspective of shareholders. Basically, it's the net operating after-taxes profit minus any opportunity costs for invested capital. This number is then compared to the minimum rate of return required by investors, known as the weighted average cost of capital. The amount that the company lands above or below that rate is then used to judge the company's health.

EVA believers feel that this method is superior to others because it can be calculated at the divisional level, it better tracks performance over time and it recognizes that companies must eventually account for both operating and capital costs. EVA-ites say that EPS, by comparison, fails to show how many resources go into creating growth. Moreover, EVA simplifies a company's finances by coordinating the three basic financial statements (income statement, balance sheet and cash flow statement) into a single method for calculating value. Another major benefit of EVA, according to Stern Stewart, is that it keeps shareholders happy, which makes companies safe from hostile takeovers. It also points out that EVA creates greater transparency, because it's too hard for sections of a company to hide from its glaring spotlight.

Early adopter

One of the most well-known companies to come onboard with the idea of EVA was soft-drink manufacturer Coca-Cola. The company likes to describe how EVA inspired it to switch to cardboard containers for shipping cola concentrate. Although the stainless steel containers that it had been shipping were reusable, the lower initial cost of cardboard containers freed up assets that could be used right away for other purposes. The value of those freed assets more than made up for the money saved through the reusability of the steel containers.

Some rain on the parade

However, EVA does have its detractors. Much of this skepticism comes from the belief that EVA-ites rely too heavily on just one metric. Business guru Gary Hamel has said, “No one measure can capture all the dynamics of corporate performance.”

Some people worry that companies that depend too much on EVA will start to ignore other important areas, such as product quality and customer satisfaction. Many high-tech firms feel EVA doesn't adequately measure the value of innovation and knowledge capital. In addition, even some EVA believers acknowledge that although it's excellent for determining financial statement issues like acquisition value, it doesn't give much insight into how to run companies on a day-to-day basis.

But that's not EVA-rything

The Stern Stewart process is more than just calculating EVA, though. The firm tries to figure out how customers can not only be given value, but also generate it. Among its methods are benchmarking to determine the client's value against current and future estimates for both the market and competitors; coordinated allocation of investment funds based on greatest potential value; and customized pricing strategies. In addition, the firm selects strategies for each unit of a business based on growth, efficiency or consolidation. It may establish a pay-for-performance culture to increase results, and in periods of transition, it analyzes and streamlines mergers and acquisitions. Stern Stewart also helps clients get in shape for IPOs.

Building colonies

In July 2006, G. Bennett Stewart left the consulting side of Stern Stewart to become chairman and CEO of EVA Dimensions LLC and chairman and chief investment officer of EVA Advisers LLC, both subsidiaries of Stern Stewart. EVA Dimensions concentrates on providing the data, software and modeling services needed to completely integrate EVA into clients. EVA Advisers is a subsidiary of EVA Dimensions and focuses on investment advice. It claims to be the only fund manager providing portfolios that are based strictly on EVA.

The firm also continues spreading the word on EVA through the Stern Stewart Institute. The institute attempts to create discussion and feedback among professionals in research, practical management and management consulting. It offers conferences, seminars and workshops every year. Past participants have called it a "think tank of value management."

GETTING HIRED

Level by level

Although the Stern Stewart web site is limited in the resources it offers to job seekers, it is fairly candid about the track a new hire will follow. Addressing entry-level hires (the analyst position), the firm states: "You will be assigned your own areas of responsibility in project work from the first day on, and your responsibility will grow successively as you succeed in your work. This is followed by the levels senior analyst, associate, senior associate, vice president, senior vice president and, ultimately, managing director." Analysts are also expected to participate in nonconsulting office processes, such as marketing and even recruiting.

Applicants holding an MBA will be considered for the associate position. According to the firm, "We are looking for MBA graduates of top-ranked schools who have a solid understanding and education in corporate finance, accounting and economics. Candidates should be confident in calculating the cost of capital, performing valuation exercises using FCF [free cash flow] and benchmarking methods, and thinking about principal-agent issues." Additionally, the firm seeks candidates who are skilled at "building and delivering presentations, conducting research and writing reports, leading meetings and training sessions, and managing projects."

The company does not provide a list of open positions, but resumes and cover letters can be sent to careers@sternstewart.com. Location preference should be included in the cover letter.

Stockamp & Associates, Inc.*

6000 SW Meadows Road, Suite 300
Lake Oswego, OR 97035
Phone: (503) 303-1200
Fax: (503) 303-1224
www.stockamp.com

LOCATIONS

Lake Oswego, OR (HQ)

20 approved living locations throughout North America

PRACTICE AREAS

Patient Progression®: Inpatient Flow Solution
Patient Progression®: Surgical Flow Solution
Revenue Cycle Solution

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
CEO: Dale Stockamp
2008 Employees: 450
2007 Employees: 400

**In July 2008, after publication of this guide, Stockamp was acquired by Huron Consulting Group, and is now a Huron Consulting Group practice within the company's health and education segment.*



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Top in health care"
- "Canned solutions restrict creativity"
- "Flexibility in terms of living location"
- "Snooty"

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #3 – Interaction with Clients
- #7 – Formal Training
- #10 (Tie) – Relationships with Supervisors
- #11 – Offices
- #11 – Overall Satisfaction
- #12 – Compensation
- #12 – Firm Culture
- #14 – Best Firms to Work For
- #15 – Work/Life Balance

Diversity

- #6 – Diversity for Women
- #9 – Best Firms for Diversity
- #11 – Diversity for GLBT
- #14 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- "Empowerment and ownership given to associates early on"
- "From day one, there is a conscious focus on continual development with a companywide emphasis on feedback"
- "Being able to follow the project from design through implementation"
- Open and receptive senior leadership

DOWNERS

- "Conservative nature"
- "Self-promoting comes in handy"
- No maternity/paternity leave
- "We are so specific with our solutions and scope of work"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.stockamp.com/index.jsp?pageID=careers

E-mail: recruiter@stockamp.com

THE SCOOP

Hospital helper

Sometimes, at hospitals, it's the balance sheet that needs a shot in the arm. Enter Stockamp & Associates, a health care consultancy with more than 100 projects involving hospitals and health systems under its belt. The Oregon-based firm applies analytical principles to the processes of revenue cycle, patient flow and care delivery in an attempt to improve efficiency and management of hospital operations from preservice through care and payment.

This focus on the phases of hospital business informs the firm's signature service: the revenue cycle solution. Stockamp starts by integrating the steps in revenue generation—appointment creation, appointment completion, receipt of payment—into an unbroken cycle. Assembled this way, improvements made at any point in the continuum are comprehensive. The company claims it can begin to manifest benefits in the first 30 to 60 days of a project and, more dramatically, that typical improvements over five years can reach \$50 million to \$100 million.

Patients are a virtue

In addition to its revenue cycle solution, the company offers two additional primary services known as patient progression: inpatient flow and patient progression: surgical flow. The notion of patient flow revisits the continuum concept of the revenue cycle solution. At any given time, patients are engaged in some phase of care (scheduling it, awaiting it, receiving it, recovering from it and paying for it), and effective movement through those phases will grant a health care provider stronger financial results and the ability to serve more patients.

When administering the inpatient flow service, Stockamp measures performance in key areas, such as discharge delays, full-capacity situations, housekeeping bed turnaround and accuracy of predicted discharges, to determine what factors are stifling capacity. Changes are implemented in concert with the staff, with the aim of maximizing flow-through while still assuring the right care at the right time for each patient. The key to this service is that hospitals are able to increase capacity without capital expenditure for new space or beds.

The surgical flow service applies the design and strategy of the other two solutions to the operating room. The surgical care cycle, which begins with OR scheduling and moves through to postsurgical patient transfer and billing, is examined and then streamlined with new work methods and tools. Stockamp claims that a 1 percent to 3 percent annual increase in net patient revenue is typical after implementing this service.

Medical evidence

The actual results of these services can be seen in the firm's case studies. In an engagement with the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania that spanned from October 2005 until July 2006, Stockamp executed its inpatient flow solution. It redesigned flow processes, introduced new tools and technology, trained the staff and established performance measures and management reporting. The effects were multifold—a two-and-a-half-hour decrease in severity-adjusted average length of stay; an increase from zero to 46 percent in next-day anticipated discharge accuracy; a drop in housekeeping bed turnaround time from 77 to 45 minutes; and a three- to four-hour improvement in the time taken to assign patients to medical services and beds.

Showing similar success, an 11-month revenue cycle project with The Children's Hospital-Denver, started in March 2005, produced an \$8 million net improvement in annually recurring income, a \$10 million one-time cash flow improvement over a 12-month period and a decrease in the call abandonment rate (that is, callers who hang up before resolution of the call, usually due to long waits) from 14 percent to 5 percent, among other benefits.

Head of the KLAS

Though Stockamp generally keeps a low profile, its successes have not gone unnoticed in the business community. In a repeat win from the year before, Stockamp was given the 2007 Best in KLAS Award in the category of revenue cycle consulting—transformation. KLAS Enterprises, which sponsors the award, is a research firm specializing in monitoring and reporting the performance of IT vendors, medical equipment vendors and professional service companies in the health care field. KLAS chose Stockamp for the honor on the basis of health care providers ranking it the No. 1 revenue cycle professional services firm for the second consecutive year.

GETTING HIRED

One, two, three

Candidates should expect “three rounds of interviews,” in which the first round “consists of behavioral interviews, and the second round has behavioral and case study interviews.” For campus candidates, preliminary rounds may be “performed on campus,” but for all potential hires, the third round “involves a visit to a current project site with a day of interviews and sessions with the project team.”

The first-round behavioral interview typically lasts “30 to 60 minutes,” while sessions in the second round are longer—usually “60 to 90 minutes.” A “basic test regarding some simple math” may also be thrown into the mix. The on-site final round offers “lots of company and project background,” as well as an exploration of the candidate’s “interests and personality.” “The hiring process is intense and very methodical,” a source says, and a manager estimates, “We probably only hire one out of any 10 people we interview.”

Stockamp recruits at a laundry list of state and private schools, including Georgia Tech, Howard University, private colleges in Minneapolis, Penn State University, Vanderbilt University, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, University of Texas-Austin, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of California-San Diego and the University of Michigan. One source who applied through the firm’s web site says, “I heard back from a recruiter within a couple of days, and had a phone interview followed by two on-site interviews. The whole process was very smooth and fast—the recruiters always got back to me within a week, letting me know my status in the process.”

Think it through

First-round behavioral questions are meant to determine how candidates “respond to specific situations,” whereas case study questions are “focused on how they analytically think through situations.” Says one respondent, “The case study is intended to see how the candidate works through a problem, what thought process they have, etc. It’s not a trick question, and not even something that you have to answer correctly. The interviewers are more interested in seeing how the candidate approaches and breaks down problems into manageable pieces.” Besides being prepared to show off your analytical skills, one senior associate comments, “The best advice would be to come prepared with lots of researched questions.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Scout it out

A “young and energetic” culture prevails at Stockamp, where staffers are “very passionate about health care and driven to positively impacting our clients.” “The firm is very supportive and innovative, so it makes for a great place for recent grads to merge into,” a consultant states. It’s an “open and welcoming” environment, “but also demands that you bring something to the table. Like most firms, we value a balance of fun and hard work. You just have to be ready to prove that you add value to the company.”

Sources say “integrity and honesty are key components to Stockamp’s culture.” “I only half-jokingly refer to us as the last Boy Scouts because of our unimpeachable integrity and the old-fashioned value we place on our people,” a senior manager explains. “I could not feel more strongly that this company is an extremely good corporate citizen and positive example in today’s environment, where business ethics have devolved from doing the right thing to doing whatever you can get away with, short of incurring prosecution.” A colleague adds that the firm’s owners are “extremely open to sharing how the business is doing as a whole, and everyone is well informed” about details that affect the company. “There’s a strong sense of ownership and accountability here, which makes each one of us proud of our contributions at the end of the day,” says one insider. An associate gushes, “Stockamp is like a big family.”

Wait your turn

Some complain that promotions can be slow—“two-and-a-half years on average.” “The top-10 percent of staffers may be promoted a little early,” an insider notes, “but it is rare.” What’s more, “this time span gets a little longer—two to five years—once people reach senior manager.” At least the promotion policy “is clearly communicated with everyone, so all employees know what they need to do in order to be promoted.” Respondents tell us the promotion process “has been somewhat up or out,” but say that in recent years, the firm has been “actively working on changing that mentality.”

In an effort to avoid the “out” half of that equation, new hires undergo a “good training program that is pretty thorough.” After that, there’s “informal training at client sites and through mentoring programs.” “There are also pre- and post-promotion classes that employees participate in, but most training occurs on the job with your direct supervisor.” “We need more executive training,” a source interjects, and another agrees that “management-level training has lagged,” but notes that in the past few years, “significant improvement has occurred, including access to new external courses at top-rated universities, as well as new online training programs.” “Additionally, Stockamp launched a tuition reimbursement program in 2008 to bolster external training options.”

Logging hours

There’s also a new focus on work/life balance at Stockamp. Contacts say the firm “has made tremendous efforts to improve this balance, and in 2007 created several focused initiatives that resulted in a significant number of policies being updated to better accommodate the demands of our job.” These days, “teams meet early on, at the start of each project, to discuss each individual’s work/life balance definition and ways to avoid burnout.”

“Projects last 10 to 12 months,” and insiders say that “if you are busy gearing up for implementation, you may be looking at a 60-hour workweek, whereas if you are in the transition phase of the project, it’s closer to a 45- to 50-hour week.” Overall, sources say workload “ebbs and flows with project deadlines,” however, “the travel can be wearing.” “We travel 85 percent of the time, Monday through Thursday and some Fridays,” a senior associate consultant explains. A colleague notes, “As you progress in the company, the travel requirements are somewhat less demanding”—but for most, the job means being away from home.

“There’s no denying the fact that we operate at an almost 100 percent travel rate while working in the field,” a source admits. “We do get an ample number of work-at-home days during the year, though, so that definitely helps us strike a work/life balance and feel more normal.” Employees typically “get to work at home three Fridays a month” and are rarely, if ever, “expected to put in time on the weekends.” Another big perk for jetlagged consultants? “We’re provided with apartments in our project cities, rather than hotels.”

A new take on pay

Respondents say the firm is doing well on compensation and perks, noting that pay is “very competitive with the market, and profit sharing occurs after two years.” “Stockamp launched an initiative in 2007 to review and ensure competitiveness of our compensation program,” a senior manager explains. “As a result, we increased base salaries across the firm, and also increased our bonus program. The net result is that we believe our base salaries are market competitive, while our total compensation (base,

bonus, 401(k), profit sharing) is market-leading.” (This “rapid response” to employee feedback on the comp issue impressed many Stockampers, including one source who says it “made me feel like our opinions were valued.”)

The firm also “started sharing salary ranges,” which some call “a great incentive plan to see what is ahead.” A manager explains, “We’ve completely restructured our bonus plan, and it is much more fair and equitable. I love the fact that our associates are now bonus eligible; they should be rewarded for their hard work too!” Other benefits include “discounted health insurance coverage for dependents,” “cash per diems for each day at the project location,” “no monthly premiums for health care, dental or vision,” and “quarterly bonuses awarded to individuals who have contributed functional or technical innovations.” Perhaps most importantly, on-the-go Stockampers “get to keep frequent-flyer miles and hotel points for personal use.”

Gain exposure as you go

Insiders also appreciate that “company leadership is extremely accessible,” and sources say their supervisors show “a very genuine effort” to care about professional and personal development. “On every project, I have felt that I have had the opportunity to get to know my managers very well,” one consultant says. “It never feels hierarchical, and the management team makes a noticeable effort to get to know each of us personally.” Agrees another, “This is a flat organization where value is placed on contribution, not title.” Access to clients’ higher-ups isn’t as forthcoming, though; associates say that they’re “generally dealing with mid- to lower levels of the client’s management. Not until you are a senior associate or manager do you have much access to the higher levels of the client’s management.”

Women are welcome

Diversity is more than a catchphrase at Stockamp: Insiders are “very proud” that their firm takes the issue seriously, and the results are visible. “Women are a vital part of the company,” one consultant says. Adds a female respondent, “I’m fairly certain we actually have more women than men in the company, especially at the associate through manager and senior manager levels. Approximately 20 to 25 percent of the director group is also made up of women at this point.” “I have known several female directors and senior managers who have been very important leaders of our company. It’s inspiring to me as a female at Stockamp,” a senior associate adds.

There’s also “an open culture” with regard to GLBT employees; “we have a number of openly gay individuals in the company, and we even announced the commitment ceremony of a gay employee on the company’s web site,” a consultant points out. A colleague notes that “same-sex partner benefits are part of the compensation package.”

When it comes to ethnic minorities, some believe the firm “could do better,” but are quick to note that Stockamp has “made notable improvements in the past couple of years and continues to actively work at it,” including expanding recruiting efforts at diverse colleges. “Since joining the company, I have been surprised at the level of commitment to diversity, not just in the traditional sense—women, minorities, gays and lesbians—but in terms of valuing personal perspectives, like background, previous work experience, faith, political biases, etc.,” a longtime employee shares.

From the heart

Spend some time with Stockampers, and you may hear about “the heart of Stockamp,” which one senior manager describes as a “focus on community and a commitment to doing well while doing good.” As such, the firm has an extensive public service program, including donations and pro bono work, as well as a match on employee donations “up to \$1,000.”

In client cities, “each project team gets \$10,000 to hold a charity project day,” a source explains. “We research a local organization, work with them hands-on for one or two days, and donate any remaining money to their cause. The impacts have been truly amazing.” In addition, “the company is now helping sponsor groups to participate in Habitat for Humanity’s Global Village projects,” sending consultants to donate time to work in Central America.

Strategic Decisions Group

745 Emerson Street
Palo Alto, CA 94301
Phone: (650) 475-4400
Fax: (650) 475-4401
www.sdg.com

LOCATIONS

Palo Alto, CA (HQ)

Bangalore
Beirut
Gurgaon
London
Mumbai

Individual consultants in several North American metropolitan areas

PRACTICE AREAS

Industry/Service Practices

Business & Asset Strategy
Corporate Portfolio Strategy
Energy & Environment
Enterprise Risk Management
Executive Education

Geographic Practices

Europe & the Middle East
India & Asia-Pacific
North America

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
CEO: Carl Spetzler
2008 Employees: 90
2007 Employees: 75



THE BUZZ

WHAT CONSULTANTS AT OTHER FIRMS ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS FIRM

- "Strong analytically"
- "Still flailing after the buyout"
- "Young culture"
- "Heavy travel"

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#3 – Formal Training
#6 – Interaction with Clients

Diversity

#4 – Diversity for GLBT

UPPERS

- "Highly interesting work"
- "Freedom and independence"
- "Rolling up your sleeves and working together with clients"
- Opportunity to work globally

DOWNERS

- "Not enough junior staff to go around"
- "Limited multiple-industry experience"
- Unpredictable work life
- "Not terribly well known outside the primary industries we serve"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Go to the Careers section of the SDG web site

THE SCOOP

A logic of its own

Strategic Decisions Group (SDG) puts an extremely high value on rigorous logic, centered on the concept of “decision analysis.” And some major companies seem to be attracted to that perspective. The firm works with more than 10 percent of the companies in the Fortune Global 500. It has a particularly strong historical connection to utilities companies, with 15 of the 30-largest North American utilities companies having appeared on its client list, entities that produce 75 percent of the United States’ electricity. Other clients have included half of the world’s 30-largest R&D-intensive companies, five of the top-10 diversified chemicals producers and five of the 10 biggest oil and gas corporations in the world. SDG maintains offices in London, Palo Alto, Calif., Beirut, and several cities in India. Although Palo Alto is the only established location in North America, the firm has placed consultants in several other major metropolitan areas on the continent. Japanese contracts are handled from the Palo Alto office.

Breaking it down

SDG co-founder Ronald Howard first developed the concept of decision analysis while teaching at Stanford University in the 1960s. Decision analysis is a way of dissecting business decisions in a formal manner, often using tools such as diagrams and decision trees. Uncertainties are transformed into probabilities and probability distributions, and decisions are made based on which options have the highest utility. Decision analysis is still at the center of the firm’s methodology, although it has been modified as new ideas and technology have come into play over the years. The approach certainly has its critics, however, whose main argument is that humans don’t actually think this way. But proponents argue that the method is simply a way of seeing options more clearly.

The firm has gradually expanded its services beyond strategic decision analysis, and it now tries to create, deliver and protect value for shareholders in any way possible. For example, SDG helps clients identify growth opportunities, create strategies and analyze and test those strategies. It also tries to help clients deal with the unknown in creative ways. Perhaps to diffuse the impression of its methods being cold and mechanical, the firm emphasizes that strategic consulting is “as much art as science,” and its literature states that among its founders’ most significant goals was creating a consulting firm that was “fun.”

Power to the people

Currently, the energy and environment industry practice is SDG’s largest. The firm sees itself as providing a unique perspective for the energy industry as it rapidly evolves in the new millennium. Some of the services SDG offers utilities includes strategy development, asset valuation, price forecasting, business and asset portfolio management, enterprise risk management and resource allocation. As an example of the firm’s work in this area, a large utility company in the Midwest was saddled with skyrocketing operating and maintenance costs and underperforming plants. In just a few years, SDG says it helped the utility revamp its budget process, cut nearly a third of the capital and costs, and improve plant performance.

Its focus on power companies may get more intense as the firm prunes away practices in other industries. For instance, in July 2007, the firm sold its oil and gas practice to Cambridge Energy Research Associates, Inc., and in December 2006, global health care consulting firm IMS Health acquired SDG’s life sciences practice. IMS Health had been especially drawn to SDG’s experience and contacts in portfolio integration and strategic consulting.

Wizards of Menlo Park

The firm was founded in 1981 by Ronald A. Howard, Carl Spetzler, James Matheson and Jeff Foran in Menlo Park, Calif. Considering its Stanford University origins, it’s only fitting that SDG emphasizes its connections to the academic world. It claims to have more PhDs on staff than most university graduate programs. Since 2006, the firm has offered a six-course program on strategic decision and risk management in collaboration with the Stanford Center for Professional Development. The program now has participants from over 25 countries and, as of April 2008, can be completed online. It is designed to help

organizations make better strategic decisions while managing risk, and it trains people to see that the quality of a decision is not necessarily connected to the quality of its outcome.

From Silicon Valley to Silicon Bolly

SDG's push into India began in 1995 through a joint venture with ECS Limited, an Indian management consulting firm. In 2007, SDG acquired ECS' strategy practice, and over the next six months, opened offices in Bangalore, Gurgaon and Mumbai. To serve its burgeoning clientele in the Middle East and North Africa, SDG opened an office in Beirut in May 2008.

GETTING HIRED

The standard route

There are "tough standards for hiring" at SDG, and sources say the firm "puts a lot of its development efforts into its recruiting process, and considers its ability to screen, hire and retain top talent a competitive advantage." "A candidate who receives a job offer from SDG has typically met and interviewed with six or seven senior members of the firm," an insider explains.

These interviews "follow a highly standardized process," a senior manager notes. The first round "is usually a quick phone or in-person screen. The second round is a business case, an analytical case that is math-intensive and an interpersonal case. If there is a third round, it is always with one or two managing partners and is meant to probe the candidate on specific questions." In the early rounds "interpersonal skills, business skills and analytic aptitude" will be tested thoroughly, and only "stellar candidates from the case interviews" will make it to the third and final round. By the time candidates reach that point, one source says, it's mostly "a values and fit assessment."

Fall's the time

Recently matriculated undergraduate applicants are candidates for the business analyst position, and SDG recruits during the fall at several universities. MBA and PhD candidates are eligible for the consultant track; they, too, should look for SDG recruiters on campus in the fall. According to insiders, popular feeder schools are "Stanford's undergrad, graduate school of business and PhD programs," as well as "Dartmouth undergrad and Tuck, Berkeley and INSEAD," but a partner says that other "top business schools and engineering schools" are on the firm's radar. SDG notes that it also recruits from the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Management. Applicants may also visit the careers section of SDG's web site and submit a cover letter and resume through an online form.

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Savoring cultural elements

"SDG's work environment and culture are exceptional," an insider raves. "It is a collegial, open, warm, creative, supportive, high integrity and nonhierarchical work environment." Others praise the spirit of "collaboration and learning" that allows staff "to use their good judgment and our shared values to make choices, rather than a set of rules or policies." Co-workers also "go the extra mile to support a work/life balance for each other."

The firm takes a distinctive approach to consulting, which consultants seem to value: "SDG was at the forefront in understanding that engagements are much more likely to be implemented and make an impact if consultants work collaboratively with clients and coach the client along the way, versus the black-box approach," explains a source. "SDG has a reputation for working with, not on, clients."

But several respondents worry that the culture may be shifting. A longtimer suggests that recent changes at SDG—including expansion in India and the sale of its oil and gas and life sciences practices—are forcing the culture into "a state of transition." As the firm evolves,

he says, there's a lack of "near-term focus on making sure we are retaining elements of our culture." Another source begs the firm to "get more talented junior staff ASAP. We can't be shaped like a martini glass for much longer and expect to be relevant."

Take your time

Staffers give SDG average marks on pay and perks. Says a source, "Base compensation is competitive, but total compensation is far below market due to small bonus payouts." Those who climb the ladder can adjust their mix of salary and bonus, often to their advantage: "As a partner, I keep my base salary relatively low and expect higher variable compensation," an executive shares. "In addition to my base salary and bonus, I also receive a percent of the firm's net income each year." Indeed, "partners are owners and build a significant personal stake in SDG."

Partner or not, "all staff members receive a personal professional development account. These are pre-tax funds that staff can spend on any specialized training, productivity tool, business equipment, etc. Staff really value having this fund, which is replenished each year." Other pleasing perks include "paid maternity and paternity leave," and the fact that employees "are free to take off as long as they like, on an unpaid basis," a benefit that many new parents appreciate. "Gym memberships" are on SDG, and consultants enjoy that "the firm is also quite flexible in allowing folks to work part time, take sabbaticals or leaves, and to work virtually."

Typical travel

So, how bad is the travel? "No better or worse than most other top consulting firms," according to one source. Another agrees, calling the schedule "pretty typical," but adds that "SDG partners and project leaders work very hard to travel smartly and to arrange schedules that enable staff to be home when there are important events to attend or celebrate, like birthdays, anniversaries or school plays." Of course, "clients expect to see members of their project team," but insiders say that, "generally speaking, we do not travel more than we need to." The travel requirement "varies from once a month to two to three weeks at a time overseas," but "we frown upon weekend travel." Those on the road can also "use tickets to bring their significant other to them, rather than returning home."

Many even consider travel to be a productive experience. A senior consultant notes that while travel "has pros and cons," at least "while traveling it is easier to focus, and airport seat time is useful desk time with a good computer." "When I travel, I work hard and long hours," a partner concurs. "I like that—it is similar to working out in a gym. When I'm not traveling, I don't like to take work home, and I like to keep my weekends free."

Committed to balance

When it comes to balancing work and life, sources say the firm has always had a strong commitment to keeping its staff happy. "One of our core values is 'enabling a sustainable, satisfying life,'" an insider states. "We protect each other's vacations, we encourage working smarter, not harder, and there is no such thing as 'see me' time at SDG." The focus is "on results and what staff can produce, not input or hours worked," so "consultants are encouraged to take responsibility for creating a work/life balance that works for their unique situations." A contact in Palo Alto adds, "We place the responsibility for the work/life balance squarely on the individuals, and then support them in their choices."

Overall, the firm "is very innovative and open in working with staff" to meet the demands of work and outside life. "Examples include working part-time, flexible hours, working virtually and taking the summer off to be with school-aged children," and respondents say SDG has almost always "accommodated staff needs for locations or time off."

A GLBT leader

"Our hearts are in the right place" regarding diversity, a source claims, "but as a smaller firm, we find it harder to attract large numbers of minorities." Still, "more than half of our partners are minorities," and sources believe SDG "would like to have more minorities represented, as we believe a diverse workforce is stronger and more broad-minded, and thus delivers even more to clients than one that is less diverse."

Women, like ethnic minorities, find that the firm takes “a free-market approach in looking for the best talent,” regardless of gender or ethnicity. Although some say this means SDG “doesn’t do anything to ensure giving women fair opportunities to either enter the firm or succeed within it,” others point to the “flexible and accommodating” policies that help women—and men, for that matter—who have children.

Higher marks are awarded for SDG’s treatment of GLBT employees. “We have always led the industry in this respect,” a higher-up reports. “I would say that SDG is among the best in this regard,” another source agrees. “We have elected many gay partners over the years, and I believe all our gay staff feel extremely comfortable working here.”

Teaching decision making

Insiders don’t have strong opinions on SDG offices, “since we tend to work either at the client or in our home offices.” Noting that “several offices have been closed,” a source gives the Palo Alto office credit for being in “a great location,” but points out that it is “space-constrained.”

Outside the office and into its communities, “SDG has a long history of supporting pro bono consulting.” Respondents say the “biggest initiative in this regard is incubating and founding the Decision Education Foundation,” which “teaches at-risk and high potential youths decision and life skills, and trains teachers to teach these skills.” The DEF has spread to “several school systems across the country,” as well as to juvenile correctional institutions. “Many of our alumni now work as paid staff or volunteers for this organization, and many of our current staff are volunteers or, in some cases, are loaned to the DEF for individual projects.”

Go back to school

Employees can’t praise SDG’s training enough, calling it “very structured and effective,” even “world-class.” “New staff attend between three and four weeks of training in their first year, and one to two weeks thereafter.” They can also turn to “a range of recorded and online training materials for the technical side of our work; these drill in the key tools and methodologies of the firm.” Besides internal training, the firm will also “bring in leading trainers from other organizations.” On the job, “people are very helpful,” and because “staff at all levels work side by side,” senior staffers are “quite open to answering questions and going the extra mile to mentor junior staff.”

Another point of pride for SDG is its strategic decision and risk management program offered jointly with Stanford University. “Short courses are available throughout the year on campus, taught by Stanford professors and SDG professionals,” a consultant explains. “Most courses are also available online, allowing you to complete them at your own pace.”

A one in two chance

We’re told that SDG staffers can “advance quickly if they want to.” And with a “grow-or-go policy” firmly in place, “it is truly up to the motivation of the individual. Responsibility is there for the taking.” “We recognize that staff develop at different rates, and we work hard to identify challenges and address them. We have an open meritocracy, where staff are promoted when they demonstrate that they have attained the skills needed to perform at the next level.” For the most part, “consultants advance every two or three years.”

One insider believes the up-or-out mentality is “not as harsh as in some firms. We hire with the express desire to select only candidates that we can see as future partners. About 50 percent make it and 50 percent drop out for personal or performance reasons.”

Strategos

820 West Jackson Boulevard
Suite 525
Chicago, IL 60607
Phone: (312) 655-0826
Fax: (312) 655-8334
www.strategos.com

LOCATIONS

Chicago (HQ)
Lisbon
London

PRACTICE AREAS

Enterprise Innovation Capability
Growth Strategy
Leadership & Organization
Management & Open Innovation
New Market & Product Development

THE STATS

Employer Type: Division of UTEK Corporation
Ticker Symbol: UTEK (Nasdaq)
CEO: Peter Skarzynski
2008 Revenue: \$13.2 million
2007 Revenue: \$10.8 million
2008 Employees: 35
2007 Employees: 31

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #5 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #6 – Firm Culture
- #6 – Overall Satisfaction
- #7 – Best Firms to Work For
- #7 – Hours in the Office
- #7 – Work/Life Balance
- #8 (Tie) – Interaction with Clients
- #13 – Compensation
- #15 – Offices

UPPERS

- “Informality”
- “The disproportionate influence we have, given our size”
- More mature staff with extensive industry experience
- “Excitement around, and dedication to, innovation”

DOWNERS

- “Limited promotion potential due to the flatness of the organization”
- Prestige factor is lacking compared to larger firms
- “Clients with above-normal political turbulence”
- Small firm size means “when you work, it’s all on you”

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

E-mail recruiting@strategos.com or visit the “Join Us” section of the firm’s web site

THE SCOOP

The mantra of innovation

At Strategos, “innovation” is king. And queen. And prince, and duke, and the whole royal family. Strategos claims to help clients achieve six basic goals: accelerate and improve new product development, create and act on game-changing strategies, identify and develop new segments and markets, tackle innovation challenges and critical business issues, build leadership skills for innovation and capitalize on competences. Since its founding, the firm has been an advisor to 25 of the 30 companies in the Dow Jones Industrial Average, in addition to several other members of the Fortune Global 500, with names that include Microsoft, McDonald’s, Disney, Whirlpool and Roche.

UTEK steps in

While 2007 resulted in a net loss of \$375,000 on net assets of \$840,000 for the firm, it remained a ripe prospect for acquisition—in February 2008, Strategos announced that it was being acquired by UTEK Corporation, a major player in technology transfers and open innovation. The move will help UTEK expand its service offerings into the realm of strategic innovation consulting services. Strategos shareholders received 1.25 million shares of UTEK stock when the transaction closed in April 2008.

As a division of UTEK, Strategos will retain its brand and operate as the strategic advisory services arm of the business, following the same go-to-market model with an expanded set of service offerings.

You have to be there

Although Strategos’ basic claims and language aren’t much different from those of other consulting firms, it does give an impression of being edgier and more energetic. For example, while “action” and “organic” are words that get bandied about by many consulting firms, very few use the phrase “live ammo” to describe their style. Strategos uses methods like taking clients to Amish communities to show them how bewildering new technology can be for customers.

The firm prominently features glowing client testimonials in its literature. One example comes from the health care firm Roche, which contracted Strategos to help make it more innovative. To that end, Strategos organized 2,000 Roche employees from over 20 countries to help assess where they thought the company should be heading. Then, 500 separate employees became part of “innovation labs” that developed around 5,000 ideas for making Roche stronger in the marketplace. Finally, those thousands of ideas were distilled into 11 concepts that had the best chance of becoming reality. Five concepts were then given a green light. Roche later said that “people across our organization are using the Strategos tools to think creatively about our businesses ... they truly were our catalyst for change.”

Gurus R Us

One of the firm’s greatest strengths has been the inclusion of Gary Hamel in its executive board. Hamel’s string of books, seminars and speeches on business strategy have made him one of the world’s most sought-after experts on the subject. His latest book, *The Future of Management*, was published in September 2007. Packed with case studies like Google and W.L. Gore (the makers of Gore-Tex), the book showcases Hamel’s admiration for innovative, trailblazing companies. However, while the case studies are interesting and the profiled companies certainly have valuable lessons for any manager, some have called the book superficial, saying it has few concrete outlines of how to actually create innovation. Others have criticized Hamel, in general, for prizing innovation above other aspects of business, which has led to some spectacularly wrong calls, such as his proclamation that Enron had a “genius for innovation” back in his 2000 book *Leading the Revolution*.

Hamel is not the only author among the firm’s upper ranks. CEO Peter Skarzynski helped write *Innovation to the Core: A Blueprint for Transforming the Way Your Company Innovates*, published in March 2008, which tries to show companies how innovation can occur in every sector of their business, not just the R&D departments.

GETTING HIRED

Experience counts

When it comes to recruiting, Strategos puts a “heavy emphasis on local Chicago schools,” such as the University of Chicago, although the firm says it looks at Harvard, Kellogg, Princeton, Columbia and MIT as well. More often than not, “postgraduate experience is required” of its applicants. “We do not recruit straight out of business school unless [someone] already [has] lots of years of experience,” a director insists.

The hiring process starts with an “initial phone screen” with a recruiter, as well as a possible “screen with a principal.” Qualified candidates will then go through around “three to six in-person interviews over the course of one to two days.” One recent hire insists there are “no classic consulting cases” in interviews, but others say to expect “at least one case,” as well as a “facilitation exercise and behavioral interviews.” A principal describes that interviews are a “combination of case questions, fit and skills,” and a colleague adds, “We try to have candidates interview with a broad range of consultants at different levels to ensure both ability and culture fit.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Well-tempered goats

Despite the fact that the “internal slang for members of the firm is ‘goats,’” (shortened from “Stratego-ats”) insiders claim their co-workers are “genuinely nice,” “open,” “friendly,” “engaging” and “helpful,” and that “people genuinely enjoy being with one another.” One principal reports that his colleagues are a “fun group to be around,” and another adds that they are “independent, experienced professionals [who] are confident and self motivated,” and who “don’t feel the need to play politics.”

A unique approach

Meanwhile, others note that although the firm is “relaxed,” “informal” and “nonhierarchical,” it fosters an “intellectually challenging environment” and is “very results-oriented.” One director describes it as an “ideas-led firm, with a clear passion for helping clients grow through innovation,” and another says it has a “new and different and compelling view of how to help organizations be more effective at their strategy development and leverage.” In particular, notes an executive, “unlike most strategy firms, we do not come into a client environment as the ‘experts,’ so there is little BS-ing required—we look to the client to provide the business/industry expertise, and couple that with our unique approach and insights to rapidly deliver very tangible/actionable results.” He adds, “We believe in the power of rich dialogue among senior client management, led by their own people, rather than just delivering recommendations that echo what client management expects to hear.” Others agree that the “philosophy” of working “collaboratively with our clients” is a unique firm bonus.

Better than all the rest

And since most “goats” have been in the consulting business for more than a decade, their perspectives on how the firm rates within the industry are especially significant. One executive says of the firm, “It has all the intellectual stimulation of BCG, but none of the frat boy nonsense,” adding that the firm is made up of “a more experienced and mature (nearly everybody is 40-plus) group of people.” In fact, boasts a recent hire, the “excellent team of people is easily better than 95 percent of the project leaders/managers at BCG/McKinsey style consulting companies.” Another director comments, “I have had the opportunity to experience other consulting firms. Based on that experience, if I leave Strategos I will leave consulting; there is no better firm.”

Get out what you put in

Similarly, we're told the firm offers "excellent work/life balance, more so than at any other top tier consulting firm." Insiders say "average workweeks do not exceed 50 to 60 hours, and most weekends are considered personal time," so "working a full weekend or pulling an all-nighter is a very rare occurrence." The "remarkably good hours" tend to be from "9 a.m. to 7 p.m., on average." One director reports that he puts in "hard work and long hours during the week, but that is the consulting business," adding, "I rarely do more on weekends than check e-mail and do housecleaning kinds of tasks." One higher-up remarks, "Like all firms, we work hard when it's called for, but there's a recognition that we're all in this for the long haul—do what you need to do to achieve balance." A managing director adds, "No one at the firm is forcing me to work harder—I take on more because it's exciting work and we're making a real difference!" A colleague agrees, "It's a personal choice. You get out of it what you put into it."

Travel as needed

Some do warn that travel is a "necessary evil of the profession" and "eats away at personal time." Although specific "travel requirements are largely project-specific," staffers tend to be on the road three to four days a week. "More time on the road means less time home to do the stuff you need to do (errands, etc.)," says a staffer.

Still, others appreciate that there is "no unnecessary travel." "Travel when you need to, don't when you don't," reports a managing director. That is, "travel is dictated by client needs, and professionals have the flexibility to make their own plans; there is no requirement that you need to be at the client in order to be billable (unless the client dictates this)," a principal explains. In his experience, having "personal flexibility (i.e., not dictated by partner or client)" in his travel plans has allowed him "to plan for personal events and have some assurance that those plans will not be derailed." He continues, "Flexibility in working from home or the home office also helps maintain balance."

An experienced colleague notes that the travel requirements at Strategos are "far better than any other consulting environment I know!" Others say that they don't mind being on the road, since "client interaction is essential to firm vibrancy and progress," "some of the best work and social interactions happen on the road" and, "in a funny way, it is easier to work long hours when on the road than when in the home city—there are fewer family pressures, real or imagined." Plus, notes a source, staying in the office can be "a bit isolating" at such a small firm, since "everyone else may be on the road."

Serious about profit sharing

Strategos also gets high marks for paying salaries that are "very competitive" for the industry. Staffers are especially pleased by the "fully funded profit sharing" of "up to \$30K annually, tax sheltered." One director suggests that "Strategos flows more of the profits into everyone's pockets than other consulting firms." A managing director comments that "nonpartners are insulated from any swings in business performance," explaining that "the partners accept the volatility risk." Strategos also offers a "company-funded health savings account up to \$2,500 annually, equaling the deductible on our individual health insurance," as well as a 401(k) and stock options.

A beer fridge

In other perks, staffers are allotted three weeks of vacation, in addition to a "traditional year-end shutdown the last week of the year," and they can also take advantage of the option of a "sabbatical (unpaid) for six months." New parents enjoy an "extensive maternity/paternity leave program, at full pay." Offices are "informal," "open," "stylish," "full of windows and light," and "comfortable," not to mention the "well-stocked fridge" complete with beer and wine. A principal reports that "every day, we eat lunch together in the boardroom."

Strategos also "matches charitable contributions up to \$3,000 per employee per year." And while community service isn't a "point of emphasis" at the firm, we're told management is "happy to support anything you take the initiative on." The firm also does some "at will pro bono" work and organizes clothing drives.

Learn on the job

In terms of training, the firm holds quarterly meetings and an annual retreat, during which some training is conducted. But most insiders agree that “almost all training is unofficial,” and “on-the-job training is really the mode of operation.” “We treat ourselves the way we treat our clients: learning by doing,” explains a director. A principal notes that “it would be useful to have a more structured approach to get new hires familiarized with methodology/approach,” but adds that “all professionals are relatively senior and experienced, so they get up to speed fast.”

It also helps that staffers have “close, honest and open relationship with supervisors,” and the firm’s small size means that staffers take on responsibility quickly. A principal remarks, “Small teams (typically two to four) of very senior professionals means that everyone on the team interacts directly with client management.” And a managing director agrees that he is “consistently working directly with corporate C-level clients and division presidents at very large corporate clients.”

A very short ladder

A negative aspect of the firm’s size is its “relatively flat structure,” which some say means that “promotions occur very rarely.” In fact, there are only two titles at the firm: principal and director. A director reports, “Depending on business conditions, you can expect promotion to director in three to five years.” A colleague warns that promotions are “far too secretive,” but another insists that “promotion to partner is based on clear criteria for client service, firm development and market development.” Others add that “there is not an up-or-out policy,” and “promotion [occurs] as abilities and growth allow.” In fact, notes a recent hire, “some remain as principals for 10 years.” As one longtimer puts it, “You can find your niche and prosper here.” There is a “conscious focus on finding the right role for each individual.” Still, some wish there were “more than just two positions, with faster opportunities for promotion.”

Triage Consulting Group

221 Main Street, Suite 1100
San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: (415) 512-9400
Fax: (415) 512-9404
www.triageconsulting.com

LOCATIONS

San Francisco, CA (HQ)
Atlanta, GA

PRACTICE AREAS

Capitation Risk Pool Audits
Continuing Education
Contract Analysis & Negotiation
Government Compliance Audits
Hospital Reimbursement Review Services (primary)
Litigation Support
Silent PPO Review
Worker's Compensation Review

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
Founders: Richard Griffith, James Hebert & Patricia Lee-Hoffmann
2008 Employees: 268
2007 Employees: 229
2008 Revenue: \$55 million
2007 Revenue: \$50 million

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #2 (Tie) – Formal Training
- #3 – Work/Life Balance
- #4 – Hours in the Office
- #5 – Firm Culture
- #12 – Best Firms to Work For
- #12 – Relationships with Supervisors
- #19 – Overall Satisfaction

Diversity

- #3 – Diversity for Women

UPPERS

- "The social awareness and responsibility"
- "Ability to take on project management responsibility at an early stage in your career"
- High proportion of women in upper management

DOWNERS

- The culture can feel "cliquey and like a fraternity"
- "Strict advancement time frames and identical salaries for employees at a certain level"
- "Not being able to see a project progress from start to finish (you will probably be assigned a new project by the time you see your current one close)"

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

www.triageconsulting.com/careers/faq

THE SCOOP

A keen eye for health care

Triage Consulting Group, founded in 1994 by Richard Griffith, James Hebert and Patricia Lee-Hoffmann, all of whom stand today as principals of the firm, is a health care consultancy with offices in San Francisco and Atlanta. Despite having only two offices, it serves health care providers in 28 states, specializing in hospital reimbursement reviews, but also offering services in worker's compensation review, contract analysis and negotiation, litigation support, silent PPO (preferred provider organization) review, capitation risk pool audits and continuing education training.

The company takes its name from triage, a term defined on its web site as a systematic process for determining priorities "in an environment of scarce or insufficient resources." Of course, Triage Consulting doesn't delay work for hospitals caught in only minor financial scrapes, but considering the company's claim that, since inception, it has recovered over \$1 billion in cash for over 250 clients, quick attention must have been given to organizations seen hemorrhaging money.

Don't mind us, we're just looking for your money

In providing reimbursement review services, the firm's mantra-like promise to clients is "Maximum Reimbursement. Minimum Disruption. Zero Investment." A project starts with seeking out underpayments to the most distant decimal point, reviewing patient accounts for payment accuracy and then recovering interest, penalties and any underpaid charges from health plans. The firm works directly with insurers, PPOs, employer groups, third-party payers and/or government agencies to collect, sending cash directly to the hospital upon resolution. For these matters, Triage taps into its own resources only, dedicating itself to progress that is independent and invisible. Fees are contingent upon the sum of underpayments collected.

The fees also reflect time spent shepherding the client to self-sufficiency by training employees to catch underpayments themselves. Having identified the mistakes that led to payment errors, the firm can recommend specific policies and procedures to prevent the re-emergence of those errors. In this way, it safeguards against future such incidents, and helps upgrade hospital contracts to industry best practices. Client satisfaction is high: For the last several years, more than half of Triage's assignments have come from repeat business, and the firm claims that most new business comes from client referrals.

For the greater good

Safeguarding against future problems can extend well beyond hospital bills. Triage strives to be a socially responsible organization and, consequently, is involved in a number of philanthropic or environmental initiatives. Through a partnership with Redding Elementary School in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, the firm contributes lesson plans and activities for students, and staffers correspond with them in a pen pal program. It also maintains partnerships with the Family House and Ronald McDonald Houses around the nation, charities that support families of hospitalized children by providing a free, safe place to stay during treatment.

To serve the environment, the company teams up with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy to work on native habitat restoration, trail maintenance and beach cleanup, among other projects. In 2007, Triage employees recycled office materials amounting to eight tons of paper, cans and bottles, and hundreds of printer cartridges and batteries.

Reputation on the rise

A number of publications have recognized Triage from among the pack of small and medium businesses. In June 2008, for the fifth consecutive year, *HR Magazine* placed the firm on its list of the 50 Best Small & Medium Companies to Work for in America. The list was compiled based on responses to an employee opinion survey. In October 2007, the Top Small Workplaces Conference & Celebration, in alliance with *The Wall Street Journal*, selected Triage out of 850 nominations as one of 35 finalists

for the honor of top small workplace in America. Finalists were chosen on the basis of revenue growth, staff retention, industry performance relative to peers and other factors.

One of the reasons for this kind of success becomes apparent in a third honor from 2007—*Leadership Excellence* magazine recognized the firm's leadership development program as the second-best in the country. Over 1,000 companies were reviewed by the publication on criteria such as vision and mission, involvement and participation, and outreach impact. The natural conclusion: Groom the best leaders, appear on the best lists.

GETTING HIRED

If the shoe fits ...

Insiders tell us that Triage finds most of its applicants through “career fairs and information sessions” at “seven campuses in California” and “five-plus additional in the Southeast,” including Stanford, Berkeley, UCLA and Duke. However, notes a manager, “Triage also accepts applications from qualified candidates from other campuses.”

Candidates typically go through a standard two rounds of interviews, the first consisting of an in-depth skills and abilities interview that’s “held on campus with a manager or principal.” The second round is held “in the San Francisco or Atlanta office,” and consists of “multiple behavioral interviews, a case study, and a lunch with an associate and a senior associate.” “The case study,” a recent hire explains, “presents the hire with a contract, a medical claim and an insurance explanation of payment, and asks them to review the contract language and to determine if the insurance paid the claim according to the contract. This gives the interviewees an idea of what Triage does, rather than being purely technical.” A senior associate agrees, “The case study is straightforward, and is designed to give you a look at the work we do, not to trick you or see how you think.”

Staffers say that the most important quality the firm looks for is “fit with the company’s culture.” An insider remarks, “Due to our unique, youthful culture, I feel our process focuses more on fit than anything else.” Another agrees, “The second round is all about determining if you would be a good addition to the company on a personal level.” The company asserts, however, that fit, though certainly a valued trait, is not at all the most important one. Offers are made, it says, on the basis of analytical abilities, leadership potential, communication skills, work ethic and the ability to thrive in a team setting.

Treated like an employee

Summer internships are relatively common at Triage, and current staffers who went through the program describe it as “a very positive experience,” and say interns “are treated as if they are an actual new hire.” A newbie states, “You go through the same training any new full-time hire would go through. You are put on a project team and given the same tasks. Our interns also get a team-building event with the managers and principals, which is a great opportunity to get to know the upper management.” A senior associate recalls, “I felt like I was another associate and really felt like part of my project team. The work was rewarding and I felt like I got the chance to take on some responsibility.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Delta Delta Delta

Sources say Triage is “kind of like one big fraternity or sorority.” A senior associate explains, “Triage specifically recruits candidates who are young (or young at heart), engaging and excited to be at Triage. The culture is extremely unique in that our employees have a fraternal love for the company and the people who work here. Many Triagers (as we have self-proclaimed ourselves) are more than just co-workers; many live together and hang out on the weekend, and some have even gotten married.” Others agree, noting that “the company feels like a family,” and “you feel like you’re working with your best friends.” A principal shares, “It’s hard to articulate just how much people here have fun working and socializing with each other.”

Some warn, however, that this extreme bonding can make things feel “a bit too close,” at times, or even “unprofessional and intrusive.” But most say the payoff is a “collaborative” environment that “makes you feel like you can accomplish anything.” A manager explains, “Because we are a company full of young people, and one of our main focuses is to maintain a small-company feel as we grow, a huge emphasis is put on getting to know your co-workers, building a team and supporting each other. We have annual team-building events that force you to work with your colleagues, happy hours to welcome each group of new hires, baby and wedding showers to support and celebrate milestones, themed days built around our guiding principles, etc.” An associate consultant adds, “This seems to be working because the employees rarely seem stressed and the company continues to grow ... both in size and in revenue.”

Off and running

We’re also told that the “collegial” environment “spills over to management in the form of a real open-door policy.” A source explains, “It’s very rewarding to be able to interact with the principals of our company on a regular basis. They take a genuine interest in you and regularly stop by for casual conversation.” Another reiterates, “Even founders of the company regularly interact with new hires/experienced associates/senior associates.” A new hire agrees that “the supervisors are very easygoing, fun and up-to-date with our young lifestyles, even though they are married and/or have families. They also join the associates in their random weekend festivities. Since I’ve joined the company, I have never once felt belittled by or less than my superiors.”

There’s also “immediate client exposure”—even for new staffers. A senior associate recalls, “I was the main contact with the executive business office director and worked closely with her and other top-level client members before I was two years in. I think Triage is one of the only companies where you work with top-level clients at such an early stage in your career.” Or, as another newbie happily points out, “24- and 25-year-olds are running projects by themselves.”

Enroll in a mini-MBA

Fortunately, there’s plenty of training at Triage to ensure that even younger staffers know what they’re doing. Insiders say “training is a big focus at Triage, and there’s a very comprehensive training program, as well as significant on-the-job training.” In “their first two years,” associates work through a “standard curriculum of 15-plus modules (120 hours).” In addition, “every entering associate is assigned a more experienced mentor with whom they can build a great relationship.” One year into the senior associate position, “you are eligible for a mini-MBA training program, which is taught by professors from MBA programs in the area, and tailored to the work that we do.” A source says of the program, “I am really enjoying it,” but adds, “It’s a lot of hard work” and “I wish we got something a little more official than just an internally generated certificate when we were finished.”

Even when the official training is complete, a manager insists that “at Triage, the learning never stops.” Staffers agree that there’s plenty of “on-site/on-the-job training” as well.

Limited challenge

Staffers are less effusive when it comes to the actual work they’re doing. Some respondents tell us that the work is “repetitive” and provides “very little intellectual stimulation.” An associate muses, “At times, I wonder if I am actually ‘consulting,’ as a lot of telephone work is required and I fail to see how it translates into consulting.” An Atlanta-based insider puts it this way: “The work is boring. If it weren’t for the people and company culture, I would not be very happy about having to come to work every day.”

Others say the grumbles are unwarranted—there’s plenty of “analytical work” to be done, and that “learning about health care from a different and new perspective is also challenging and rewarding.” A manager from San Francisco indicates, as well, that Triage’s work “provides concrete and nearly immediate benefit to clients, which isn’t always true of other consulting firms.”

Saying “no way” to weekends

Virtually everyone agrees, however, that Triage is “laid-back” when it comes to work hours, which, at an average “45-hour workweek,” are “below industry standards for consulting.” Although there’s not much time between cases, we’re also told that “there typically aren’t strict time-sensitive deadlines for our clients or for internal projects, so it’s not necessary to stay late or come in on weekends.” As an associate puts it, “Working weekends? No way.” According to one newbie, “It’s 5:45 p.m. right now and I am the only person still in the office. I’ve never worked on the weekend and I can’t imagine anyone at the office doing so. I’ve never taken work home with me or even thought about work when I am not in the office. This job is extremely low stress. That’s why the work/life balance is excellent!” The company notes, however, that a strong work ethic is a significant consideration when determining promotion eligibility for an employee.

Not everyone is so content. One senior associate suggests that although the “work hours are very reasonable,” there are “inconsistencies in how we manage and book hours.” Plus, “those that work longer hours are not incentivized to do so.” Some perspective helps too—many of the younger staffers are “fresh college graduates who have never worked these hours prior” to being at Triage, making the hours seem “a bit much.” But, as one new hire says, “I just need to get used to it!” while another claims it’s “hard to complain about 45 hours when working in consulting.”

Plenty of time to do it all

Virtually everyone agrees that the lighter load mean the firm offers a “great work/life balance.” “One of Triage’s five guiding principles is balance, and they take this very seriously,” comments a senior associate. He adds, “In my personal experience, I am able to accomplish and fulfill my life goals while at Triage. Outside of work, I run a business and participate in numerous volunteer events. I can accomplish all of this while sanely maintaining my relationship with friends. Without Triage’s support, I would not be able to do these things—it’s what keeps me here.”

A respondent agrees, “Our consultants are extremely active outside of work, and I think our work schedule allows people to maintain that high level.” It also helps that “the nature of our work is driven by internal deadlines versus client deadlines.” There’s also a “very generous vacation policy of four weeks of paid time off” that goes into effect “your first year with the firm, and can carry over from year to year or be paid out at year end.” Vacation allotment gets bumped up to “five weeks after four years, and six weeks after seven.” A contact notes, “I never leave at the end of the day feeling stressed out. The leaders do a great job making sure the staff is not burning itself out, and encourage you to take personal time and engage in outside activities as often as possible.” A recent hire agrees: “I can fit in time to exercise, read and attend social events any day I choose.” That being said, some managers warn that “the longer you stay at Triage, the more demanding the job becomes.”

Jetting about

And while the 45-hour workweek sounds like it just flies by, insiders tell us it doesn’t take into account travel time, “which can make for some long days when you are up at 3:30 a.m. for a flight.” A senior associate notes, “Most employees gripe about meeting the 45-hour-per-week expectation with travel considerations.” For example, sources say, “Travel makes a 45-hour week feel like a 55-hour week,” and “sometimes it feels that we work more hours than the average consultant at 60 hours per week.” Specific schedules vary, but “a typical Triager will travel 50 percent of his time across all projects.” An Atlanta-based consultant notes that “San Francisco offers many more traveling projects than Atlanta.”

Still, most insiders say Triage “does a great job of making the travel easier.” For example, “the schedule is set well in advance,” and the firm “offers travel perks for all the traveling we do—such as “flight credits (e.g., to fly a friend to your project location for the weekend) and per diems.” A manager continues, “A team that travels will routinely spend Monday through Thursday at their client location, while Fridays are typically spent in the home office.” Even better, “if an employee needs to travel more than 1,000 miles from the home office, the work hours are moved from nine to 10 per day for [the week], but the employee gets Friday off to compensate for the additional travel burden.” Others add that “because Triage typically houses its employees in corporate apartments when traveling, the feeling of living out of a suitcase is eliminated,” and “for the full-time traveling projects, there’s a mandatory full week in the home office every month so people can spend time at home.” Furthermore, remarks a senior

consultant, “as we continue to travel, we accrue sabbatical hours, which we are eligible to take after four years (in addition to PTO).”

More experienced staffers may be able to rearrange their schedule and minimize travel. A source explains, “I was very excited to travel when I first took this job out of college. As I have been with the company for close to three years, and as I begin to have responsibilities that require me to spend more time in my base city, I now prefer not to be staffed out of town. The firm does a good job of trying to accommodate employees’ requests when possible.” A higher-up concurs, “New technology increasingly allows us to work remotely (not on client sites), so travel can be more of an option than a necessity, if desired.”

Better by the hour

Given the relatively light hours, it’s perhaps unsurprising that many insiders say compensation at Triage is “below market rate.” An associate explains, “The company believes in balance in both work and personal life, so it could be expected that compensation would be below other consulting firms.” Of course, that depends on how you look at it, according to a manager: “If you break it down hourly, we make above market.” Still, the company insists that every effort is made to ensure its employees are compensated at market rates.

Money’s not merit-based

For better or for worse, we’re told that “all employees are compensated the same based on their tenure at the firm.” For example, says an associate, “Triage pays all of the associates the same amount and our performance doesn’t affect that at all.” A senior associate notes, “We are not paid for performance or rewarded outside of compensation (such as with recognition at the end of the year), which breeds a sense of mediocrity at some levels.” And some complain that salaries don’t increase at competitive rates as staffers are promoted. One senior source remarks, “I would say that I was overpaid for my experience as a new hire, and now I feel that I am not compensated as well for my experience three years in.” Another comments, “I feel like our associates are paid extremely well for the work they do, but then at the senior level, the compensation levels out.” And another agrees, “I personally feel that hardworking seniors and managers are not adequately compensated, and/or that there are seniors/managers at the firm who may have gotten to where they are based on their tenure with the firm and then coasted into their position. I feel this severely affects upper management retention.”

Still, the firm does offer various other financial incentives, including a “2 to 3 percent 401(k) matching program,” “a comprehensive health insurance plan (no employee match required),” and “dental and vision benefits.” In addition, staffers “are eligible for profit sharing after our first full year of work,” which “generally ranges between 4 percent and 12 percent of your salary.” On top of that, we’re told, “principals and managers also reward strong-performing individuals with tickets to various sporting events, plays, etc.,” and “at the senior level, Triage will cover the cost of AAA membership and either home high-speed Internet, wireless networking cards, gym membership or airline travel club membership (i.e., Red Carpet Club).”

Playing musical chairs

Respondents say offices tend to be “messy, crowded and loud,” sometimes making it “hard to concentrate.” A manager reports, “The open floorplan can make it challenging to focus on work, at times. Since everyone is pretty social, the noise level at any given desk area can get high on Fridays when everyone is back in the office.” An associate continues, “It can get a bit hectic since there aren’t permanent spots—you move locations when you switch projects, and often someone will be in your space while you’re out of town.”

However, “Triage is constantly working to improve its office spaces,” remarks a manager. For instance, in June 2008, the firm started providing fresh fruit daily. The goal of this vitamin boost, says the firm (aside from feeding hungry staffers), is to reduce nonbiodegradable waste and to offer healthier options—the fruit will be replacing the candy bowl that had previously been on hand. And in other healthy news, according to a principal, “Both of our offices are green. Every workspace, except one, has natural light. To the extent possible, we used recycled flooring and locally manufactured furnishings. We encourage minimal waste and maximum recycling. Supplies are purchased from vendors who donate profits to charitable organizations.” In keeping

with the recycling theme, the San Francisco location has a conference table that “is made out of an old piece from the original construction of the Golden Gate Bridge.”

Focus on philanthropy

Triage also has a “green committee that focuses on internal green initiatives and educating colleagues on becoming more environmentally friendly in their everyday lives.” In addition, respondents say the firm is “extremely active in social responsibility programs” across the board; in fact, “corporate social responsibility is one of the main focuses of Triage.” “Everyone is given 16 hours of paid discretionary time per year to volunteer through a number of community organizations/events.” Eight of these hours are used on “founder’s day, when all employees are pulled from the field to do a day of community service.” An associate reports, “Partner organizations include a local elementary school, Koret Family House, St. Anthony’s Homeless Foundation and Golden Gate National Parks Conservatory.” In addition, adds another, “We do several drives throughout the year including charity walks, runs, benefit dinners and a casino night that raises a ton of money for our favorite charity.” “Last year alone,” an associate notes, “Triage raised thousands of dollars for various charities.”

No glass ceiling here

When it comes to gender diversity, the firm “has slightly more women than men,” and women are well represented at all levels. We’re told “there are many women in upper management, including four current principals, one of three founding partners and two of four major shareholders.”

However, many staffers say that with respect to minorities, “diversity could be improved.” One staffer comments, “There are relatively high numbers of Asians in the company (East Asian and Indian), but blacks and Latinos are very underrepresented. I think the company is of course receptive to diversity as a whole, and I (as a minority) have never felt uncomfortable, but diversity isn’t necessarily a priority for management and the recruiting staff.” A manager notes, though, that “Triage participates in several on-campus diversity career fairs and partners with organizations (on the recruiting level) that promote minority recruitment.”

Similarly, most insiders are “not aware of any attempts by Triage to commit to GLBT diversity.” As one associate consultant relates, “I have known only one GLBT co-worker, and he expressed being uncomfortable with sharing his sexual preferences.” But the general sentiment is that “people are very open and welcoming, and sexual orientation is not (and should not be) considered in hiring.”

Trinity Partners, LLC

Prospect Place
230 Third Avenue
Waltham, MA 02451
Phone: (781) 487-7300
Fax: (781) 487-7301
www.trinitypartners.com
www.trinitypharmasolutions.com
www.akutacorp.com

LOCATIONS

Waltham, MA (HQ)

New York, NY

PRACTICE AREAS

Commercialization Strategy
Data Management/Data Solutions
Health Care, Pharmaceuticals & Biotech
Market Insights
Optimizing Sales & Marketing

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company

Managing Partner: John E. Corcoran

2008 Employees: 76

2007 Employees: 67

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

- #2 – Best Firms to Work For
- #2 – Work/Life Balance
- #3 (Tie) – Overall Satisfaction
- #4 – Compensation
- #8 (Tie) – Hours in the Office
- #14 – Interaction with Clients
- #15 – Formal Training
- #17 – Firm Culture

Diversity

- #18 (Tie) – Diversity for GLBT
- #20 – Best Firms for Diversity

UPPERS

- “Lots of room for advancement for high achievers, regardless of age or number of degrees”
- The firm is “in a growing phase, which allows for employees, new and old, to really have an impact on the future of the company”
- Travel is kept to a minimum

DOWNERS

- “They do not currently have a policy in place to pay for grad school”
- “Partnership structure and path to partner are murky at best”
- Formal training for experienced hires is limited

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Visit www.trinitypartners.com/careers.shtml or
e-mail careers@trinitypartners.com

THE SCOOP

It's important to have your health

With surgeon-like focus, Trinity Partners concentrates solely on advising health care companies, specifically in the biotech, pharmaceutical and medical device fields. Its clients include members of the Fortune 100, among them several of the top-10 pharmaceutical and biotech companies worldwide. The therapeutic areas that the firm deals with are extensive, and include oncology, metabolics, cardiovascular, autoimmune disease, CNS, urology, infectious disease and many others.

Founded by current Managing Partner John Corcoran in 1996, Trinity sees itself as a leader in commercial strategy, with strong quantitative support for its recommendations. Its services include statistical sampling, forecasting and regression models, survey design, univariate and multivariate modeling, time series analysis and survival data. Generally speaking, the firm focuses on two types of projects: solutions for clients in major therapeutic areas who need significant help with sales and marketing, and finding innovative ways to develop, synthesize and organize data in new fields and markets where traditional methods are ineffective.

Crunchy numbers

Trinity realizes that there is already an enormous amount of data available to health care companies. The problem comes with wrestling the data into a workable form. According to the firm, this requires multidisciplinary skills for coordinating the data, and an understanding of the methodology involved with data collection. To compete in such a growing field, companies need the metrics for determining who their top customers are, how their competitors are doing and how their own sales force is performing. Services from the data team include custom sales reporting tools, contract incentive programs, incentive compensation and sales force deployment. On the consulting side, the firm offers statistics, forecasting, licensing and acquisition, due diligence, portfolio planning and optimization, strategic marketing, primary market research, persistency and compliance strategies, and patient flow modeling.

Spin-offs

In 2004, Trinity Pharma Solutions was born, a subsidiary focusing on technology-based solutions for the pharmaceutical and biotech industries, particularly data management and sales operations. Trinity Pharma attempts to integrate its IT solutions into a client's existing framework, to complement and enhance it. In 2005, the subsidiary raised its capabilities further by teaming up with applications and services provider Spotfire. One of the primary benefits of this pairing is that Trinity Pharma gained access to Spotfire's highly interactive data mining software, DecisionSite.

In the system

In the pharmaceutical arena, Trinity uses its in-house pharmaceutical reporting system for managing data, which tries to create one controlled source for data integrity. This allows the firm to process data from a variety of sources into an easily digestible form that can be used by clients, and to customize that form to fit any client's particular requirements. The system is designed to be flexible enough so it can be added or overlaid onto any company's existing framework or installed completely on its own.

In 2006, the firm launched Akuta Corporation. The reason behind Akuta's founding was that Trinity couldn't find adequate software to fully support medical science liaison (MSL) teams or disseminate their information. In addition, Trinity wanted to create technology that could bring together key opinion leader databases with the databases of MSLs. To achieve these ends, Akuta developed mslConnect, a software system that creates a single center for sharing resources, communicating from the field and connecting the field to headquarters. Akuta also finds and creates needed metrics, clarifies steps, and works with compliance requirements and procedures.

White papers and wrestling

Trinity publishes a steady stream of white papers; recent examples include “Alcohol Consumption Among Older Adults in Primary Care,” “Therapeutic Area Crossroads: Anti-Angiogenesis” and “Tapping the Potential of Fixed-Dose Combinations.” Trinity consultants are known for extracurricular work, as well. For example, John Corcoran is also a founders of a medical device company concentrating on stent technology for spinal medicine, and consultant Chris Nowinski has received media attention for his research on sports-related head injuries, prompted by his own injuries as a former professional wrestler.

GETTING HIRED

An elite pool

Insiders tell us that Trinity recruits from only a specific set of schools: Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton and MIT at the undergraduate level, and Tuck, Columbia, Sloan and Harvard at the graduate level. “Of course,” adds a principal, “we consider candidates from other schools as well, but this is generally where we go.” A source notes that “graduate hiring focuses either on MBAs or other relevant degrees (MPH, PhD).”

The firm’s hiring process consists of a standard “three rounds of interviews.” The first “is typically a 45-minute interview and case study,” and the “second round usually includes two interviews.” Both are “often conducted on consecutive days,” and “are done on campus (for undergrads) or in the office for experienced hires.” Finally, qualified candidates “come to Trinity’s offices in Waltham, Mass., for the third round and have five to six interviews.” A recent hire adds that once the third round of interviews is over, and presumably after an offer has been extended, “Trinity treats the candidates to a spectacular dinner and fun night out to give them a taste of Trinity outside of work and a feel for Boston life.”

The right prescription

Respondents say “all rounds will consist of several cases” and, in general, “case studies play an important role in the evaluation process.” One consultant notes that the case study questions are “always specific to the life sciences field (pharmaceuticals, biotech, medical devices),” although another notes that “no pharmaceutical specific knowledge is needed for the cases, especially at the undergraduate level.” Staffers were kind enough to provide us with a slew of examples, including, “Help me decide if such-and-such a market segment would be a good place to invest in a clinical trial”; “Help me understand why my client’s drug fell short of forecast last year”; “How much will a drug for cardiac diagnostic procedures make in a year?” “How would you value the pre-Alzheimer’s market in the U.S.? How would you develop that market from scratch today?” “You are evaluating a drug for Lupus (or any medical condition) and you find three sources for the size of this population—all of which tell you different numbers. Explain how you would determine which, if any, is correct”; “Tell me how big the market for (any condition) is”; and, finally, “Your biotech company has two interesting drugs in the pipeline, but only enough money to bring one forward right now. How would you decide which one?”

In addition to conquering the case studies, adds a partner, “analytic aptitude, quantitative skills and fit are also important. It would be difficult for someone without high math/quantitative aptitude to get through the process.” A colleague agrees, “Trinity does use case interviews, but we also interview for fit, and both are equally important. We look for people with quantitative, analytical backgrounds.” She continues, “Industry knowledge is a plus, but not necessary. We look for students who have experience in the hard sciences or finance, economics or engineering. That being said, if the fit is there and a student is quantitative and analytical, we do not limit to certain backgrounds.”

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Striking the right balance

Insiders say the best part about Trinity is that, although it “demands high-quality work at all times,” it still has a “highly congenial atmosphere, where coming to work is always a pleasant experience and co-workers often become friends.” A principal points out, “We are completely casual in dress, but yet hire from only the most demanding institutions and expect the highest caliber of professionalism in our work.” Others agree that the environment is “fun,” “friendly” and “very relaxed,” but still “involves challenging everyone to excellence and then rewarding them when they achieve that goal.” “The culture of my firm is phenomenal,” raves a recent hire, adding, “I love the balance between being professional and laid-back.”

Meanwhile, a senior consultant claims, “the best part of Trinity is our ability to build relationships with clients and with co-workers. People are very close and enjoy coming to work most days.” A partner adds that “consultants want to stay” at the firm because “we have a very open culture where our goal is to give very smart, very capable professionals ample opportunities to develop. We also like each other, as a rule, and it is very common for the Trinity staff at all levels to go out together for drinks, dinner, etc.” And, “as the firm has grown at high rates in the past few years, the ability to maintain this culture speaks to the significant role it plays in the company.” At the same time, adds another, “The company is young enough that each incoming class makes its own mark.”

High quality, low stress

True to this theme of fostering equilibrium, Trinity also “prides itself on promoting a good work/life balance,” which means that although the work is top notch, “for a consulting firm, the hours and stress [are] not very high.” In a nutshell, says a content consultant, “My managers genuinely care about my happiness and professional development, equally. They are willing to be flexible in my time and staffing to allow me to have a fulfilling personal life. At the same time, they challenge me to take on as much as I can to develop the skills I need to get to the next level.” Others agree that “there is a minimal concept of face time,” and that “management is always understanding of personal situations and very flexible with hours/working off site if necessary.”

“While we do expect that the work product is superb,” explains a principal, “we are very flexible in terms of hours. On average,” she adds, “I would say our days are from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and I can only recall one weekend meeting. Of course, you may still check in on the weekends and prepare for the upcoming week, but generally the weekends are sacred and bosses don’t demand meetings or anything like that.” “As with all firms,” echoes a newer hire, “we work to meet our deadlines, which can cause some late nights. Those late nights, however, are often offset with the ability to leave early or work from home once projects are completed. You’re much more likely to work a late night than on the weekend. Weekends are pretty sacred at Trinity.” And if you do put in long days or weekend work, “fortunately, your extra hours don’t go by unappreciated.”

Willing to accommodate

Respondents say the firm specifically accommodates special situations and encourages outside commitments. An associate shares her own experience: “I was able to move across the country (for personal reasons), and my company not only supported me in this transition, but helped me excel at working remotely. Keep in mind I had only been here one year and we don’t have many people work remotely.” Another staffer says “management is very flexible toward a new parent’s time and work setup,” noting, “A few mothers currently work three days a week with limited hours per week. A customized plan, whether it is working from home, working part time, taking a hiatus while the baby is young, etc., are all possibilities.” And, reports an “avid triathlete” who also volunteers one night each week, “All of Trinity’s employees are involved in teams, volunteer organizations or families outside of the office. It’s a great group of people to work with since everyone has so many hobbies and interests, including traveling abroad, athletics, volunteering and company activities.”

Sixty's the limit

In all, staffers say they average “50 hour weeks,” which still gives them free time for other interests. Of course there are peaks and valleys, notes an associate: “The nature of the business often produces busy periods (closer to 60 hours per week) and quiet periods (less than 40). That said, I have had very few weeks where I worked more than 60 hours per week.” A colleague agrees, “I have never worked more than 65 hours in a week.”

On the flip side, staffers say “we don’t have beach time at Trinity,” largely because the “staffing model allocates multiple projects to each person.” That also means “you’ll never be bored.” Being staffed on multiple projects, echoes another, “you are able to expand your own knowledge base at a faster pace, and it means there is always different project work to mix up your day.” Of course, there are “weeks where you have too much to work on,” but again, a principal emphasizes, “there is a lot of investment in staff planning to try to prevent overload.” In fact, a consultant notes, “this year, they’ve committed to a significant number of internal projects that will increase our resources, allow us to do our jobs better and make our lives easier.” She continues, “I’m really impressed that they’ve committed to this initiative, even though it will lead to fewer billable hours in 2008.”

Newbies get lucky with travel

Also keeping hours reasonable is that “travel requirements are a lot lower” than at many other firms. A consultant explains, “The work we do very rarely requires work on site,” and a partner adds, “We do not believe that the role of a consultant is to travel Monday through Thursday and to have office hours on Friday.” We’re told that “leadership (partners, principals) do travel a lot and might be on the road five to 10 days a month,” but “for the rest of the staff, travel is less frequent.” “As an associate,” a recent hire comments, “I typically travel outside of the Boston area once every month or two—enough to keep it exciting!” “I look forward to travel instead of dreading it,” agrees another. And as there are no trips just for the sake of being on the road, says a source, “the travel we do enhances my understanding of client needs, plus it’s most effective to do final presentations in person.” She continues, “I learn a lot from on-site meetings, and the client enjoys the efficiency of meeting in person.”

Ample rewards

On another positive note, staffers report that “quality work is rewarded generously” at Trinity, because the firm is “very invested in keeping successful employees.” Salaries are “definitely in line or better than industry average,” and many say they are “completely satisfied with Trinity’s compensation.” “I had a competitive starting salary, and I have been given fair, significant raises throughout my career thus far,” shares a consultant with three years’ experience. We’re told that “bonuses are not guaranteed,” but an insider insists, “We have never not had them.” Specific amounts “range from around 20 to 30 percent for new hires, and up to 50 percent for senior hires.”

Trinity also offers a 401(k), “great medical and dental coverage,” life insurance and disability for all full-time employees. Staffers are comfortable in their corporate space since “almost all Trinity employees have offices rather than cubes.” In other perks, there are numerous “bonding events,” like team dinners, bowling outings, golf outings, a soccer team, a softball team and a company picnic. There’s also an “extravagant holiday party” that “includes dinner, dancing and great live bands” and is “always at an exciting locale.” In addition, one consultant mentions, “last year our team took an off-site trip to Puerto Rico for team building and strategy development. While this type of trip is not guaranteed every year, it is definitely a reward for a great year.”

No special sponsorship

To date, Trinity hasn’t been as generous with the community at large. “Currently we do not have any major community involvement projects,” a staffer remarks. However, we’re also told “this is one of the major initiatives the firm wishes to pursue in the future.” An associate notes, “This is a key internal project being spearheaded this year, both to provide a chance for employees to bond outside of the office and, more importantly, to give back to our community.” But even without an official company initiative, “various employees are involved in volunteer organizations” independently, and they “reach out to others for fund raising, clothing drives, etc.”

Performance-based promotion

Within the Trinity community itself, staffers are adamant that there is “absolutely no up-or-out policy” and that “promotions are based on performance.” “People can advance at their own rate,” explains a higher-up, “anywhere from no advancement in some cases, to rapid advancement within one year in some extenuating circumstances.” Others agree, “Promotions are given on an individual basis when management feels the employee is ready and deserving,” and “managers are willing to discuss skills needed to be promoted at any time and will promote people as soon as they are ready.”

On average, entry-level associates “can often advance to consultant level in 15 months (that’s really fast—these are the highest performers) to 30 months,” but a senior consultant explains that “from there, it’s all based on your performance and the amount of business you manage.” One satisfied consultant says, “I have been extremely impressed with their ability to give credit where credit is due and to promote in a timely fashion,” adding, “Managers are also great about giving constructive feedback so employees know where to focus their improvement efforts so promotion can be achieved as quickly as possible.”

Training tops out at the start

And since “Trinity focuses on promoting within,” a consultant points out that the firm “invests a lot in its employees and their training, client relationships, etc.” As such, the firm conducts an initial “two-week intense official training program, where new associates learn skills such as Excel, Access, PowerPoint, etc., but also industry knowledge about pharmaceuticals and biotech, specifically.” Then, explains a staffer, “each new hire is assigned a buddy under whom they work on all new projects for four to six months. They are not staffed exclusively with that buddy, but most of their projects are with their buddy. This allows them to develop skills under the watchful eye of a more experienced person and gives them a chance to ask more questions.” This “informal mentorship works out better for some than for others,” but many believe that through the pairing, “second- and third-year employees really help the first- and second-year employees with adjusting to the workforce.”

In terms of subsequent formal training, sources claim “it’s on you to find classes or information sessions.” However an associate states, “There is an internal movement to formalize post-new-hire training,” and a principal agrees that, “in general, training is one place where Trinity has acknowledged it needs work, and is trying to address that need.” To that end, a consultant remarks, “I’ve been really impressed with Trinity’s commitment to internal development this year. We’ve had more seminars (on presenting, advanced forecasting techniques), more conference attendance and personal development (and interpersonal skill) workshops.”

Constructive criticism

But it’s not hard to find assistance, staffers say, since “everyone is always willing to answer a question for you.” We’re told that “Trinity prides itself on the flat structure of the firm.” “From my perspective, this has definitely held true,” reports one consultant. “As a first-year associate it is not uncommon to be put on a project one on one with a principal, or even a partner.” She adds, “Trinity management has invested a lot into maintaining a flat environment in which new employees feel comfortable both working and socially interacting with top management.” And an associate raves, “At Trinity, you are given whatever level of responsibility you aim for. This allows you to build lasting relationships in the business sector and provides a unique experience handling client needs.”

As another staffer puts it, Trinity “encourages best practices by the high quality of your co-workers, not a barking boss.” A colleague agrees that managers “provide constructive feedback in semiannual 360-degree reviews, and are very honest about their own strengths and shortcomings”—so much so that a source claims she would rate her boss as less than perfect, because “I think my boss would be disappointed if rated perfect. He is very interested in constructive criticism.”

Emphasizing equality

And while we’re on the subject of improvement, “there are remarkably few women beyond the consultant level,” and one associate hopes the firm will “work on retaining women for upper-management roles.” That being said, she adds, “As a woman,

I have never felt as if I was treated differently than my male counterparts.” Plus, we’re told, “Trinity is very accepting of women,” and some say that overall the firm has “more women than men.”

Similarly, many respondents say that, although “ethnicity, religious and sexual preferences are all represented at Trinity,” they “would like to see more diversity” overall. “I think we have improved here, and as we have gotten bigger, the firm has grown much more diverse,” says a partner. He adds, “We have a number of diverse professionals (African-American, Hispanic, openly gay and Asian), and we expect this number to grow even more.” Another source continues, “There are openly gay members of our staff, and largely it’s a nonissue here. Staffers have brought same-sex dates to company events, and the firm as a whole has a culture of inclusiveness.” And one gay contact comments, “My sexuality is known openly and treated equally.” She continues, “I have never run into any issues with my sexuality, and most people are more than accepting of my lifestyle. It is hard for them to understand how much of a difference it makes.”

Vivaldi Partners

125 Park Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Phone: (212) 965-0900
Fax: (212) 965-0992
www.vivaldipartners.com

LOCATIONS

New York, NY (HQ)

Los Angeles, CA
Amsterdam
Buenos Aires
Düsseldorf
Hamburg
London
Madrid
Munich
Zurich

PRACTICE AREAS

Innovation
Marketing
Organization
Strategy

THE STATS

Employer Type: Private Company
CEO: Erich Joachimsthaler
2008 Employees: 85
2007 Employees: 87

RANKING RECAP

Quality of Life

#8 (Tie) – Hours in the Office

Diversity

#14 – Diversity for Women
#17 – Best Firms for Diversity
#17 – Diversity for Minorities

UPPERS

- An international, diverse staff
- “Entrepreneurial culture”
- “Very diverse client base, which allows us to get exposure to a range of industries”
- “Access to management/clients”

DOWNERS

- “Unclear career path”
- “Lots of politics”
- “Requires a comfort level with ambiguity—on project teams and with firm management”
- Salaries are on the low end for the industry

EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

E-mail: recruiting-usa@vivaldipartners.com

THE SCOOP

Composers of strategy

New York-based Vivaldi Partners specializes in brand strategy, innovation and marketing, and enjoys a presence in North America, Latin America and Europe. Clients come from a number of industries, including automotive, energy, food and beverage, financial services, media and entertainment, health care, nonprofit, retail and technology/telecommunications, among others. Some of the firm's highest-profile engagements have been with American Express, British Telecom Global Services, PepsiCo, Pfizer, Sears, Schlumberger and Volkswagen. Client work is conducted at any scale, from single, focused capabilities up to the guiding of major transitions and challenges.

The unifying note

All of Vivaldi's work is driven by its DIG ideology—Demand first Innovation and Growth. DIG drives plans and strategies to reflect comprehensively the outside demand from customers. That is, rather than searching out groups and demographics that may be interested in an existing product or service, the firm designs or changes products and services to accommodate what really matters to customers or consumers. To achieve this, Vivaldi undertakes a broad assessment of behaviors, needs and desires in the social-situational context of work or life to determine demand. The assessment can make use of as few as 15 consumers through journals, in-field observation and discussions, or it can be quantitative with access to a pool of more than 10 million consumers. Vivaldi, along with its strategic partners, gathers insights in over 20 countries and across different markets (both business to consumer and business to business).

The methodology behind these immersive studies is based on the everyday actions of three categories of consumers, as defined by Vivaldi: “the fringe,” those with unusual or extreme patterns of consumption; “the edge,” those armed with high awareness of products, including availability, quality and lasting power; and “the core,” those in the middle of the bell curve who exhibit average consumption patterns. Additional methodologies are followed, but the company continually returns to an analysis of basic consumption habits. Vivaldi sums up the approach with its mantra, “the best predictor of behavior is behavior.”

Making the brand

The firm is particularly known for its brand management expertise. Over the years, it has completed more than 500 branding assignments on five continents. Clients are guided through a complete cycle: creation of a product concept, design of a business plan and, ultimately, launch and development of the brand. Vivaldi's creative teams are experienced in all aspects of design, including corporate, industrial, environmental, packaging and naming. If this proves to be insufficient or inappropriate to the best direction of the brand, independent entities can be brought in to supply new design elements.

Vivaldi also applies this knowledge to brand valuation. It can advise clients on the drivers of a given brand's value, and also help identify and tap new markets. The firm has access to over 75 studies on the effectiveness and penetration of brands in over 20 industries.

The mighty pen of Joachimsthaler

To enhance and nurture their reputation as thought leaders in the industry, Vivaldi consultants frequently publish books and articles on consumer insight, brand strategy and marketing. CEO Erich Joachimsthaler is one of the firm's most prolific writers; in 2007, he came out with *Hidden in Plain Sight: How to Find and Execute Your Company's Next Big Growth Strategy*, and two articles—“Making the Most of Customers,” an exhortation to study the needs of consumers, rather than attempt to alter their needs, which appeared in the journal *Leading Ideas*, and “Room to Grow,” an explanation of the best approach to innovation and growth, which appeared in *Marketing Management* magazine. Additional works of business scholarship by Joachimsthaler have been published in the *Harvard Business Review*, *Sloan Management Review* and *BusinessWeek*.

GETTING HIRED

Marketing matters

Insiders report that Vivaldi's hiring process "typically starts with a phone HR interview, followed by two rounds of in-person interviews." A senior consultant explains that the "first round is usually three 45-minute interviews (one person at the same level and two supervisors, or sometimes one person at the level below)," while the "second round will be a director or managing director." There are "no brainteasers" to worry about, although the process "generally includes a couple of cases." Interviews focus on candidates' "background, marketing knowledge and culture/fit." One recent hire notes that a "brand strategy discussion" might include a question like, "If you were brand X hoping to achieve result Y, what would you do?"

An engagement manager advises that candidates "should have a perspective on what marketing is, on how you create a marketing strategy and favorite brands, and on the benefits and challenges of working for a small company—and what attracts you to Vivaldi in particular."

Cream of the crop

In the past, insiders say Vivaldi has recruited at schools such as Harvard Business School, Columbia and Cornell, but one director says the firm hasn't "felt the need" to do much recruiting of late. Recruited or not, an associate notes that "all employees come from top schools, mostly Ivy League."

OUR SURVEY SAYS

Shiny, happy people

Content staffers say Vivaldi's atmosphere is "open, young, collaborative and entrepreneurial." "The firm's culture is not very hierarchical—everyone is approachable and accessible due to the familial environment," a senior consultant remarks. Others agree that their colleagues are "great people" who are "smart, warm, kind, supportive and friendly." A newbie notes, "We're a relaxed firm (in terms of dress, start time), and our culture is not at all 'corporate.'" Instead, adds a co-worker, "Vivaldi has a nurturing environment where great relationships form easily, regardless of level." Another source agrees, "There is an open-door policy and management is very accessible, from directors to the CEO. This is definitely a benefit of working for a small company."

Moans about management

In more lukewarm reviews, one director says that the firm, while "open to initiative," is "sometimes difficult to navigate and is not very structured." A recent hire agrees that Vivaldi is "lacking in corporate structure and strong leadership." And, with no mincing of words, an associate comments that "the senior members of the firm dictate professionalism at work, when they are not at all professional themselves." In her opinion, "supervisors are often micromanagers who stunt the growing process." Others gripe about "disorganization," and concur that there are "difficult personalities in management"; they warn that the "limited number of partners to work with" can make things "challenging if working styles don't mesh."

Aiming for C-level

Respondents report much better interaction with management on the client side. Overall, staffers say they get "great client exposure." "On many occasions," shares a senior consultant, "proven junior consultants are able to participate, and are often encouraged, to present in client meetings with C-level executives." A longtimer insists, "The firm provides much greater access

to clients than most consulting firms,” adding, “even the junior staff gets to go to most client meetings. Directors get to lead sales pitches with C-level executives.”

Learn while doing

And it's expected that staffers will learn by example, since “almost all training is unofficial, on-the-job training.” “Consultants are expected to seek out resources on their own, and leverage other consultants or management for getting information,” explains one source. A colleague adds, “There is a mentoring system, but very few consultants use it. They tend to seek out unofficial mentors, as official ones have little pull with management.” He continues, “On-the-job training includes lunchtime presentations from other project teams and occasional talks from the advisory board. Most of the training is done informally on day-to-day project work.”

That being said, we're also told that “there are emerging efforts to establish a few formal training modules, and there have been efforts made over the past year to offer more formal training for new consultants.” In addition, a senior contact notes, “specific topics can be addressed with specific training sessions (problem-solving skills, oral communication skills). Also, development plans are put together for each of the consultants, and they work on their development plan in concert with their project manager.”

Creating careers

Assuming these development plans go smoothly, respondents say “consultants are usually promoted within one to two years.” A director explains, “Promotions are done once a year after performance reviews, with possible promotions at the midyear review.” One staffer comments, “There is no up-or-out policy, but underperforming consultants generally leave on their own.” Meanwhile, an engagement manager insists, “Vivaldi wants people to create their careers here and develop a real expertise in marketing, branding, consumer insights and strategy”—hence the lack of an up-or-out policy. Some sources add that “consultants can move up the ladder pretty quickly.”

Decent hours, given the industry

Those who stick around are kept happy with schedules that are “very reasonable for consulting.” “Our workweek is supposed to be 50 hours. During busy projects, it will typically be more around 60 hours,” reports a senior consultant. A colleague notes that “there are wide fluctuations” in workload, but says they usually balance out. He points out that he is “sometimes working until 10 p.m. every night before a big presentation,” but also says there are “sometimes a few weeks of focus on business development between projects, which is generally less intensive.” Others agree that “on a tight deadline project, it can be challenging to set boundaries,” and one insider complains that “while work/life balance has improved in past years, there is still a need to put in face time when unstaffed, and vacations are difficult to plan.” But overall, says a senior consultant, “compared to other consulting companies, it definitely feels like we have a much better work/life balance.”

Earn flexibility

Flexibility is a big factor in facilitating that work/life balance. “The firm is very flexible in allowing you to work from home, should you need to take care of something,” reports a recent hire. Co-workers agree that “everyone honors your personal life commitments, and efforts are made to make sure that people can take time off when needed.” There is a “common understanding that people have lives,” a director reports, adding that “consultants get comp days when they have put in too much work on the weekends.” A senior consultant agrees that there is a “sense of flexibility in managing your own time/schedule, which is very nice and is probably due to the size of the firm and the more family-like atmosphere.” One senior source says “you have to earn that flexibility (don't ask for a day to work from home your first month on the job),” but claims that “once you've proven yourself, your manager tries to work with you to help you achieve balance, while also meeting client and team needs.” That is, assuming your manager is a good one: Another staffer remarks, “Occasional long workdays are due to inefficiency of managers, not large workload.”

Little time on the road

Staffers also say that, “compared to traditional consulting firms, the travel schedule is fairly minimal.” We’re told “consultants only travel for key client meetings and research trips, and projects do not require consultants to work on site.” On average, travel comes up “about one to two days every other week,” a source explains, although it “can be more as you get more senior.” A colleague notes, “We try to balance between conference calls and travel,” adding that consultants and clients will “perhaps meet in person at the project’s start to establish the relationship, and then for key decision points, but they use calls in the interim to limit travel strain.”

Coming in behind on compensation

Vivaldi doesn’t fare as well when it comes to salary: Staffers say “people at the firm are very aware they could receive better financial compensation elsewhere.” They complain that “bonuses and bonus structure are not well communicated by the company,” and one associate notes, “The firm is currently three-and-a-half months late on paying bonuses,” adding, “So far, no one has gotten a bonus, not even the senior management.” Another respondent agrees that Vivaldi “has had some problems honoring contract commitments/bonuses, given the economic climate.” Furthermore, the firm “does not offer a 401(k) matching program.”

Vivaldi’s tight reins on budget are also apparent when it comes to community involvement. Although one director mentions “a bit of pro bono consulting,” most report that the firm does not participate in charitable efforts. A longtimer states, “The CEO is too work-focused to consider community involvement,” adding that “individual consultants do community work on their own, and sometimes invite their peers to participate informally.”

Did somebody say free food?

Despite any compensation woes, a source insists that “the scope of interesting work often keeps people here.” It certainly helps that consultants can take “vacation almost any time they want it, since vacation time and personal days are very generous.” And free food is always a good way to a consultant’s heart: Vivaldi sponsors a “high-tech espresso machine,” a “catered breakfast every Monday,” “food during meetings” and “taxi/dinners when working late.” It also organizes “fun officewide activities,” such as a “scavenger hunt in the city and an international beer-tasting cocktail hour.”

Comfortable, if not trendy

Staffers in New York tell us they are “comfortable” in their office environment, which is “very professional” and in a “great location that’s very convenient.” A few say they are disappointed that the new space is “a bit too corporate, given the trendy Soho space we were in before,” but others note that “there was a big effort made last year to bring back the more open feeling from the company’s previous offices.” A senior consultant explains, “Cubicle walls were lowered, some of the spaces were rearranged and it has worked very well. The space feels more open now, and there seems to be more exchange between the consultants.”

Quadrilingual crowd

During that consultant exchange, we’re told, “on any given day you’ll hear three to four languages,” as many staffers have “international backgrounds,” giving the office “a very worldly feel.” In fact, says a higher-up, “there is probably an average of four languages spoken per person.” Indeed, Vivaldians are a diverse crowd; for example, one contact notes, “among our consultants are opera singers, an ex-professional figure skater, a cellist, an oil painter, a cabaret singer and an ice hockey player.” Others say the firm “has always been ethnically diverse, and is blind regarding sexual preferences.” A colleague agrees, “Vivaldi has an extremely diverse and international set of people, and this is one of the great assets of the firm.” Another feels the diversity is especially “impressive, given the company’s relatively small size.”

That said, the firm is less balanced when it comes to gender, but not in the traditional sense. One associate spells it out: “It’s ALL women.” A senior consultant agrees, adding that “women have no problems with being promoted up until the director level.” However, “the firm does not have any women in top management, with the exception of two directors.” Others point out that “the top management (globally) is all white men.”



TOP

50

APPENDIX

CONSULTING
FIRMS

Index of Firms

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF FIRMS

A.T. Kearney	127	Keystone Strategy, LLC	406
Abt Associates Inc.	344	KPMG LLP	158
Accenture	140	Kurt Salmon Associates	232
Advisory Board Company, The	274	L.E.K. Consulting	116
AlixPartners, LLP	217	LECG	304
Alvarez & Marsal	307	Lewin Group, The	410
Analysis Group, Inc.	323	Mars & Co	316
Aon Consulting Worldwide	319	McKinsey & Company	44
Archstone Consulting	327	Mercator Partners LLC	413
Arthur D. Little	248	Mercer LLC	87
Bain & Company	62	Milliman, Inc.	417
Bainbridge, Inc.	348	Mitchell Madison Group LLC	300
Bates White	351	Monitor Group	78
BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	221	Navigant Consulting, Inc.	211
Booz & Company	70	NERA Economic Consulting	205
Boston Consulting Group, Inc., The	52	North Highland Company, The	422
Brattle Group, The	358	Novantas LLC	425
Buck Consultants	364	OC&C Strategy Consultants	432
Cambridge Associates LLC	195	Oliver Wyman	102
Capgemini	173	Opera Solutions	436
Celerant Consulting	368	PA Consulting Group	442
Cornerstone Research	294	Parthenon Group, The	150
Corporate Executive Board	290	Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	448
CRA International, Inc.	237	Point B	452
Dean & Company	373	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	110
Deloitte	92	Prophet	456
Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	253	Protiviti Inc.	459
Droege & Comp.	377	PRTM	260
Easton Associates, LLC	381	Putnam Associates	464
Ernst & Young LLP	122	Quintiles Consulting	471
First Manhattan Consulting Group	284	Roland Berger Strategy Consultants	184
FTI Consulting, Inc.	277	Segal Company, The	474
Gallup Consulting	268	Simon-Kucher & Partners	477
Gartner, Inc.	179	Stern Stewart & Co.	483
Giuliani Partners LLC	386	Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	486
Greenwich Associates	389	Strategic Decisions Group	491
Hay Group	331	Strategos	496
Health Advances, LLC	394	Towers Perrin	169
Hewitt Associates	200	Triage Consulting Group	501
Huron Consulting Group	241	Trinity Partners, LLC	508
IBM Global Business Services	134	Vivaldi Partners	515
IMS Health Incorporated	335	Watson Wyatt Worldwide	227
Kaiser Associates	400	ZS Associates	189
Katzenbach Partners LLC	162		

FIRMS THAT ARE SUBSIDIARIES OF LARGER COMPANIES

Aon Consulting Worldwide	319
Arthur D. Little	248
Buck Consultants	364
Deloitte	92
Gallup Consulting	268
IBM Global Business Services	134
Kurt Salmon Associates	232
Lewin Group, The	410
Mercer LLC	87
NERA Economic Consulting	205
Oliver Wyman	102
Protiviti Inc.	459
Quintiles Consulting	471
Strategos	496

FIRMS WITH MAJOR HR PRACTICES

Accenture	140
Aon Consulting Worldwide	319
BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	221
Buck Consultants	364
Corporate Executive Board	290
Deloitte	92
Gallup Consulting	268
Hay Group	331
Hewitt Associates	200
IBM Global Business Services	134
Katzenbach Partners LLC	162
Mercer LLC	87
Milliman, Inc.	417
North Highland Company, The	422
PA Consulting Group	442
Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	448
Segal Company, The	474
Towers Perrin	169
Watson Wyatt Worldwide	227

PUBLIC FIRMS

Accenture	140
Advisory Board Company, The	274
BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	221
Capgemini	173
Corporate Executive Board	290
CRA International, Inc.	237
Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	253
FTI Consulting, Inc.	277

Gartner, Inc.	179
Hewitt Associates	200
Huron Consulting Group	241
IMS Health Incorporated	335
LECG	304
Navigant Consulting, Inc.	211
Watson Wyatt Worldwide	227

FIRMS WITH NON-U.S. HEADQUARTERS

Arthur D. Little	248
Capgemini	173
Celerant Consulting	368
Droege & Comp.	377
Ernst & Young LLP	122
L.E.K. Consulting	116
PA Consulting Group	442
Roland Berger Strategy Consultants	184
Simon-Kucher & Partners	477

FIRMS WITH 10,000+ EMPLOYEES

Accenture	140
BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants	221
Capgemini	173
Deloitte	92
Ernst & Young LLP	122
Hewitt Associates	200
IBM Global Business Services	134
KPMG LLP	158
McKinsey & Company	44
Mercer LLC	87
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	110

FIRMS WITH FEWER THAN 1,000 EMPLOYEES

Advisory Board Company, The	274
AlixPartners, LLP	217
Analysis Group, Inc.	323
Archstone Consulting	327
Bainbridge, Inc.	348
Bates White	351
Brattle Group, The	358
Cambridge Associates LLC	195
Cornerstone Research	294
CRA International, Inc.	237
Dean & Company	373
Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc.	253

Droege & Comp.	377
Easton Associates, LLC.	381
First Manhattan Consulting Group	284
Giuliani Partners LLC	386
Greenwich Associates	389
Health Advances, LLC	394
Kaiser Associates.	400
Katzenbach Partners LLC	162
Keystone Strategy, LLC	406
Kurt Salmon Associates.	232
L.E.K. Consulting	116
Lewin Group, The	410
Mars & Co.	316
Mercator Partners LLC	413
Mitchell Madison Group LLC.	300
NERA Economic Consulting.	205
North Highland Company, The	422
Novantas LLC	425
OC&C Strategy Consultants	432
Opera Solutions	436
Parthenon Group, The	150
Pearl Meyer & Partners, LLC	448
Point B	452
Prophet.	456
PRTM.	260
Putnam Associates.	464
Segal Company, The	474
Simon-Kucher & Partners	477
Stockamp & Associates, Inc.	486
Strategic Decisions Group	491
Strategos.	496
Triage Consulting Group.	501
Trinity Partners, LLC.	508
Vivaldi Partners	515

FIRMS WITH 50+ OFFICES

A.T. Kearney	127
Accenture.	140
Aon Consulting Worldwide.	319

BearingPoint, Inc. Management & Technology Consultants ...	221
Booz & Company	70
Boston Consulting Group, Inc., The	52
Capgemini	173
Deloitte	92
Ernst & Young LLP	122
FTI Consulting, Inc.	277
Gartner, Inc.	179
Hay Group	331
Hewitt Associates.	200
IBM Global Business Services	134
IMS Health Incorporated.	335
KPMG LLP	158
McKinsey & Company	44
Mercer LLC	87
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	110
Protiviti Inc.	459
Towers Perrin.	169
Watson Wyatt Worldwide	227

FIRMS WITH FEWER THAN 5 OFFICES

Advisory Board Company, The.	274
Bates White	351
Dean & Company	373
Easton Associates, LLC.	381
First Manhattan Consulting Group	284
Giuliani Partners LLC	386
Health Advances, LLC	394
Katzenbach Partners LLC	162
Keystone Strategy, LLC	406
Lewin Group, The	410
Mercator Partners LLC	413
Mitchell Madison Group LLC.	300
Novantas LLC	425
Parthenon Group, The	150
Putnam Associates.	464
Strategos.	496
Triage Consulting Group.	501
Trinity Partners, LLC.	508

About the Editor

Naomi Newman

Naomi Newman is the global consulting editor at Vault. She graduated with a BA in American Studies from Barnard College, with a concentration in Economics.