

The defining aspect in determining whether a consulting professional possesses clear and sound judgment is their incorporation of ethical frameworks for managing morally ambiguous issues that challenge their personal resolve and domain expertise. A professional consultant distinguishes an individual who through their academic background, industry training, and acquired certifications, offers specialized knowledge and strategy to potential clients seeking resolution to business related issues. A client's trust and a consulting firm's reputation are predicated on the consultant's ability to deliver actionable recommendations and prescriptive results in service of bettering both the client's interests and society at large. While a code of ethics is not meant to replace decision making, it should supplement deliberate thinking especially when the consultant's intuition becomes conflicted and their professional responsibility is called into question. The consulting profession comprises various distinct fields, for example, a financial strategist has different obligations compared to a Data Scientist, however, there is a general set of principles that defines a professional consultant's duties and accountability.

### **1. Client Relationship Standards:**

Consultants must strive to deliver outstanding service by furthering and protecting client interests with honest and integral strategies. In order to establish a functional and lasting relationship with a client, the consultant shall:

- 1.1 Competently administer trustworthy and loyal service while fostering value and innovation.
- 1.2 Serve with distinction and accept responsibility for all outcomes associated with their actions.
- 1.3 Maintain commitment towards bettering both the client's business and the societal realm in which they occupy
- 1.4 Handle Client Information in accordance with privacy laws and regulations.
- 1.5 Monitor confidential data with special attention to potential data breaches.
- 1.6 Professionally manage and resolve conflicts of interests
- 1.7 Conduct all business proceedings in accordance with ethical and legal guidelines

Consulting clients expect honest and effective resolutions to their business problems in exchange for the consultant's financial compensation. There are several risks associated with doing business with high profile clients that must be addressed to prevent severe damage to the client, firm, or society at large. Data protection is critical and the consultant must implement the necessary precautions to ensure data remains confidential. The client trusts the consultant to implement technical safeguard practices such as ensuring data remains encrypted, having strong passwords on all devices containing confidential data, and maintaining the location of all such devices. Disclosure of any personal client information is strictly prohibited unless there are legal reasons to do so.

Consultants must prioritize the success of their clients over their personal gains. In the long run, the consultant will gain notoriety and prestige by having a continuously lasting streak of satisfied clients. To establish a successful reputation, the consultant must manage conflicts of interest to preserve the client's trust in their judgment. If a consultant is discovered to have acted outside the bounds of ethical and legal guidelines, there will be severe damage to both the consultant's and the firm's reputation that may result in disciplinary action or termination.

## **2. Professional Working Environment and Behavior**

To be competitive in the industry, consulting firms actively seek out top talent by providing opportunities for advancement and growth through a positive working environment. This means providing a safe space for collaboration between the brightest minds in the field where individuals can feel respected and are incentivized to thrive. It is the duty of each consultant to

- 2.1 Project professional characteristics to promote a community of motivated individuals
- 2.2 Uphold diversity and inclusion principles
- 2.3 Not tolerate harassment or unfair discrimination
- 2.4 Protect the health and safety of all others
- 2.5 Consider whistle-blowing in the cases of negligence and abuses of power
- 2.6 Submit claims of retaliation against raising moral and ethical concerns.
- 2.7 Not engage in illegal use of drugs and restrict alcohol consumption to off hours or when management approves.

The working environment and the interactions between employees are fundamental to the firm's success and ability to cultivate talent. Cultural diversity and equal opportunity practices are implemented to ensure an inclusive culture that includes a multifaceted set of viewpoints, talents, and experiences. If workplace safety is compromised by corrupt behavior or the consultant witnesses malpractice, whistle-blowing is a protected activity and a valid course of action. In many cases, whistle-blowing can prevent severe societal damage and may help correct problems and reduce risk. If there is any retaliation from management including demotion, negative performance reviews, and reduced salary in response to raising ethical and legal concerns, the consultant is advised to report such behavior so it can be properly investigated and resolved accordingly. In the case of drug and alcohol use, they are considered a hindrance to the professional quality services the consultant is expected to provide. Reports of engagement with illegal use of drugs and intoxicating behavior are cause for investigation and disciplinary action including termination and suspension.

## **3. Fulfilling Societal Responsibility**

The consultant must comprehend the extent to which their actions can bring about intended or otherwise unintended consequences for which they will be responsible. In order to have a positive and lasting impact on society, the consultant must

- 3.1 Align the client's priorities and interests with the economic, legal, and social issues concerning society
- 3.2 Understand the wide-ranging societal impact on the client's stakeholders, customers, and all involved communities
- 3.3 Maintain commitment to human rights interests
- 3.4 Minimize their environmental impact and comply with environmental policies and practices

Consulting firms interact with a broad array of clients at a global level and the consultant will encounter issues regarding labor laws and human rights violations. Whether the consultant is engaged with financial institutions, governing bodies, or commercial businesses, the effects on the broader society must always be prioritized and deeply considered. The consultant must also promote sustainable development as they possess the ability to reduce their environmental footprint and support environmental policy and activism.

#### **4. Maintaining Firm Reputation and Status**

As a representative of a larger organization, the consultant must protect the firm's reputation and maintain its public trust. The professional consultant should

- 4.1 Avoid all corrupt behavior such as bribery, money laundering, or any sort of illegal activity
- 4.2 Act accordingly with all relevant laws and regulations
- 4.3 Not be engaged with any suppliers or third parties involved in illegal or unethical behavior.
- 4.4 Respectfully acknowledge outside competition

Considering the scope of the consultant's work, there will be situations in which legality is called into question. The consultant may be tempted by monetary gain at the expense of ethical principality in which the consultant's moral resolve must withstand and reject corruption. The consultant is also responsible for diligently vetting all potential suppliers and third parties to ensure they do not risk their client's integrity.

#### **5. Professional Leadership Qualities:**

Morally just and distinguished leadership traits are not reserved for senior and managerial consultants. All employees shall strive to demonstrate a reputable sense of character while also acting within their scope of influence and granted managerial authority. The professional consultant should

- 5.1 Be objective in decision making and evaluation of client and societal concerns
- 5.2 Protect the integrity of professional judgment by refuting biases and conflicts of interest.

5.3 Exemplify all ethical principles included in the code of ethics to promote a fair and safe workspace

5.4 Administer employee misconduct with fair disciplinary proceedings and thorough investigations

Strength of character is a foundational aspect of the consultant's core competencies and a necessary attribute for becoming a better professional. Leadership is critical for organizational structure in that it ensures the right incentivizing factors to promote strong work ethics amongst consultants. Consultants at all levels must display strong leadership abilities as they will be working at the forefront of society and are relied upon for innovative solutions.