
Internal Consulting: Trusted Advisor Practice for Business Partners Course

22 – 26 March 2027
Barcelona





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Programme Summary

Internal consulting is a five-day training course for senior business partners and heads of function at advanced level, culminating in a consulting engagement plan for a live internal client request. Advice from central functions is often accepted in meetings and then quietly ignored. The approach follows the consulting cycle from contracting through discovery, feedback and implementation, while building the behaviours that earn trust without line authority. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in internal consulting and trusted advisor practice.

The Business Case

Central units hold expertise that line managers need, yet their advice often arrives late, answers the wrong question or lacks an owner. When advisers contract clearly, diagnose jointly and hand over deliberately, recommendations are adopted and the function is invited in earlier.

- Adoption of Recommendations: Rises as internal clients co-own the diagnosis and the decision to act.
- Rework and Escalation: Falls as scope, roles and success measures are agreed at the outset.
- Internal Client Confidence: Grows as advisers are seen as credible, reliable and focused on the client's outcome.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Peter Block's Flawless Consulting Phases: Entry and contracting, discovery, feedback, engagement and closure structure Sessions 1 to 4.
- Block's Consulting Roles: The expert, pair-of-hands and collaborative roles frame how participants choose their stance with each client.
- Edgar Schein's Models of Helping: Purchase of expertise, doctor-patient and process consultation guide the diagnostic choices in Session 2.
- The Trust Equation: From The Trusted Advisor, it shapes the relationship work in Session 3.

Intended Participants

- Leaders who advise senior line managers on people, finance, technology or performance decisions they do not own.
- Business partners who must turn vague requests into defined, agreed pieces of work.
- Heads of central units who are judged on whether their recommendations are implemented.
- Senior specialists in strategy, transformation or project offices who lead cross-functional reviews.

The programme serves human resources, finance, technology and quality functions in government, energy, banking and healthcare.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to construct a written contract with an internal client covering scope, roles, data access and success measures.
2. Participants will be able to select an appropriate consulting role and helping model for a given internal request.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose an organisational problem using interviews, process mapping and root-cause analysis.
4. Participants will be able to present findings in a way that secures a decision to act rather than polite agreement.
5. Participants will be able to respond to client resistance by naming it and redirecting the conversation.
6. Participants will be able to design a handover and implementation plan that leaves ownership with the line.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Internal Consulting Roles and Contracting

What does the internal client really want, and what will each party commit to?

- The Dual Role of Employee and Adviser
- Expert, Pair-of-Hands and Collaborative Consulting Roles
- Entry Conversations and Clarifying the Presenting Problem
- Contracting for Scope, Wants, Offers and Data Access
- Written Engagement Agreement Template

Day 2: Discovery and Diagnosis

How is the presenting problem separated from the underlying one?

- Schein's Purchase of Expertise, Doctor-Patient and Process Consultation Models
- Diagnostic Interviews and Focus Groups
- Process Mapping and Hand-Off Analysis
- Root-Cause Analysis and Cause Clustering
- Separating Technical Data from Political and Cultural Data

Day 3: Trusted Advisor Behaviours and Influence

How does an adviser without line authority earn the right to challenge?

- The Trust Equation and Self-Orientation
- Stakeholder Mapping by Power and Interest
- Influence Without Authority and Reciprocity
- Recognising and Naming Client Resistance
- Saying No and Renegotiating the Contract



Day 4: Feedback, Decision and Implementation

How do findings become a decision the client owns?

- Structuring Findings for a Feedback Meeting
- Options Appraisal and Recommendation Criteria
- Running the Decision-to-Act Meeting
- Implementation Roles, Milestones and Handover to the Line
- Engagement Closure, Review and Extension Options

Day 5: Applying Internal Consulting to a Live Request

Is the engagement ready to launch with a client who will act?

- Contracting Rehearsal for a Participant's Own Internal Client
- Diagnostic Plan Built from the Session 2 Tools
- Stakeholder and Resistance Plan Using Session 3 Methods
- Peer Review of Feedback and Handover Approach
- Consulting Engagement Plan Completion

Methodology

The programme uses structured role-play built on realistic internal requests from finance, HR, IT and operations. Paired consulting conversations are observed by peers and debriefed. Each participant develops one current internal client request across the week.

- Suggested activity: Contracting with a director who asks for a new policy when the issue is workload.
- Suggested activity: Diagnosing repeated delays in an approval process through interviews and a process map.
- Suggested activity: Delivering unwelcome findings to a sceptical senior client.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a consulting engagement plan for a live internal client request. It contains the engagement agreement, chosen consulting role, diagnostic approach, stakeholder and resistance map, feedback meeting outline and handover plan.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is internal consulting training suitable for experienced business partners?

Yes. It is set at advanced level for business partners and heads of function who already advise line managers; it assumes expertise in your own specialism, not prior consulting experience.



Which models does internal consulting and trusted advisor practice rest on?

It rests on Peter Block's Flawless Consulting phases and consulting roles, Edgar Schein's models of helping and the Trust Equation from The Trusted Advisor.

How is the internal consulting engagement plan used at work?

You can use it to open your next internal client engagement with an agreed contract, a diagnostic plan and a clear handover.

How does internal consulting differ from external management consulting courses?

It focuses on advising colleagues you keep working with, without a commercial contract, rather than selling and delivering client projects.