

How to Choose the Right Pharmaceutical Consultant – 7 Key Considerations

So you've decided to call in a pharmaceutical consultant. In this time of increasing costs, growing regulatory burdens, and greater government intervention—when maintaining a competitive edge is increasingly more difficult—using outside help can be a wise decision. All you have to do now is determine which pharmaceutical consultant is the right one for your company.

The goal of pharmaceutical consulting is to fill gaps. A good consultant looks at where you are now and where you need to be and then determines the steps and methods needed to get you from here to there. So, selecting just the right consulting firm for your company and your needs involves not so much examining what the consultants can do, but *how* they do it. Below are 7 key considerations involved in choosing the right pharmaceutical consultant.

1. Honesty

Now this one may seem painfully obvious, but it is something you just can't afford to overlook. Generally, consulting firms offer a broad range of services, with a few (or several) areas of special knowledge and expertise, and most of them can get the job done to some degree or other. The trick is figuring out whether and how well a consultant can actually fill your particular gaps and solve your specific problems. After an initial assessment, good consultants will give you an honest idea of exactly what (if anything) they can do for you.

2. Knowledge/Experience (Team/Personnel)

Again, this may seem *prima facie* too obvious to deserve mentioning, but it's the *combination* of knowledge and industry experience, the total skill sets of the pharmaceutical consulting team members, that you need to consider. There needs to be both breadth and depth. Consider, for example, the founders and managers of Smart Consulting Group, Nigel and Denise Smart. Combined, they have 45+ years of experience in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry—Nigel possessing a strong academic background in chemistry, microbial/fermentation technology, and biochemical engineering and Denise with training and experience in the legal arena.

3. Flexibility (Vision/Perspective)

One of the worst things that can happen when you engage the services of a pharmaceutical consulting firm is that the consultants come in with a preconceived and mostly solidified idea of what needs to be done. And that means the solutions they propose may not be the best solutions for your specific situation. What is needed instead is for your consultants to look at the

problem(s) from every possible angle and perspective, analyze and test ideas, and formulate multiple potential solutions. Then, together, you can decide which solution will be the best both now and in the long run. But flexibility doesn't end there. For example, the project associates with Smart Consulting can even work as substitute staff and as temporary team members.

4. Leadership Ability

Consultants don't just assess and advise—they also have to lead. They have to be able to get members of an organization to accept and adopt proposed changes and, further, must possess the ability to imbue both management and employees with a little of their own passion. Good consultants who are good leaders have the following attributes: ability take action and overcome obstacles, commitment to fostering and nurturing commitment, ability to deploy creative problem-solving, persistence, faith in the abilities of others, and willingness to educate people when and where necessary.

5. Familiarity with Issues Specific to the Pharmaceutical Industry

The pharmaceutical industry is, simply put, different. And that's why many of the attempts to implement lean manufacturing in this industry have been less than impressive. Transferring what worked in the auto industry directly to the pharmaceutical industry—without adjusting for industry-specific issues such as many unit operations, the high cost of manufacture, technical complexities, and the highly regulated nature of the industry—isn't a recipe for great success.

6. Good Fit

Every company has its own distinct corporate culture, a specific way of being and doing peculiar to that organization. So you simply have to make sure the pharmaceutical consultant you're considering is a good fit for your organization. Asking questions, requiring solid references, and carefully examining track records can go a long way toward ensuring the fit that ensures success.

7. Willingness to Build Relationships

Consultants are not just contractors called in to do a job . . . who then disappear when the job is finished. Good consultants have to be willing to establish long-term relationships. The right pharmaceutical consultant for your company is the one willing to establish a relationship built on trust and mutual benefit and to be available for long-term, ongoing contact. It has been said that good consultants are business therapists whose primary goal is their client's success.

The right [pharmaceutical consultant](#) for your organization can be a great asset to help you regain or maintain a competitive edge. But choose wisely. Nobody wants to be stuck in a bad relationship.

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