

Key Consulting Skills

For Success in Today's Business Environment

Karl Albrecht International

1. **Business knowledge** – a basic understanding of how commercial enterprises operate. This includes a smattering of Marketing 101, Finance 101, and a variety of other "101's" a professional person accumulates through formal education or direct experience in the business environment.
2. **Organizational knowledge** – a grasp of the design, structure, dynamics, sociology, and especially the politics of organizations, particularly those of the organization the consultant is working with.
3. **Conceptual skills** – also referred to as "helicopter" thinking. This includes the ability to understand and articulate the "big ideas," and to think both systematically and creatively.
4. **Analytical skills** – the ability to gather, manage, analyze, interpret, and present facts, data, information, knowledge, and opinions.
5. **Interpersonal skills** – also referred to as "social intelligence." This includes the ability to empathize with, understand, influence, lead, and persuade others on a one-to-one basis, as well as in group situations.
6. **Group-leading skills** – also referred to as group-dynamic skills. This includes the ability to lead or manage a group process, usually in the context of helping the group to solve problems, or leading it through a challenging thought process. Much of our work is done in the context of meetings and group problem solving sessions.
7. **Presentation skills** – also referred to as "stand-up" skills. This includes the ability to present ideas clearly, compellingly, and persuasively to groups ranging from a small executive team to a large audience. This goes well beyond the standard PowerPoint "bullet-point" slides, and includes visually compelling, imaginatively designed presentation aids and collateral materials.
8. **Writing skills** – the ability to craft a literate sentence and to string a series of literate sentences together into a compelling message. This requires a large and fluent vocabulary. Competent writing can have a huge impact on the quality of the work product, in client communication, and in the preparation of winning proposals.
9. **Information design skills** – the ability to conceptualize, graphically, important information and key findings in such a way that they support the consulting objectives. In particular, these days, this includes the ability to use computers, software, and web-based display options, to organize information for its intended use.

10. **Physical and emotional stamina** – a consultant needs to be healthy. Consulting work often involves sudden changes and severe time pressures; if the job calls for working until midnight to prepare for the executive meeting in the morning, it has to be done. If a sudden change in the client schedule means taking an overnight flight and buying an extra set of clothes at the other end, then that's what you do. Not everyone has the necessary stamina (or willingness) to work under pressure. It's not always grueling, but when it is, it is.

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